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The Heroine of Heartware

Jill Estorino, the president and managing director of Disney Parks International shares insight, thought leadership, and advice for busy attractions professionals





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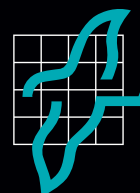
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The Heroine of Heartware

Jill Estorino, the president and managing director of Disney Parks International shares insight, thought leadership, and advice for busy attractions professionals

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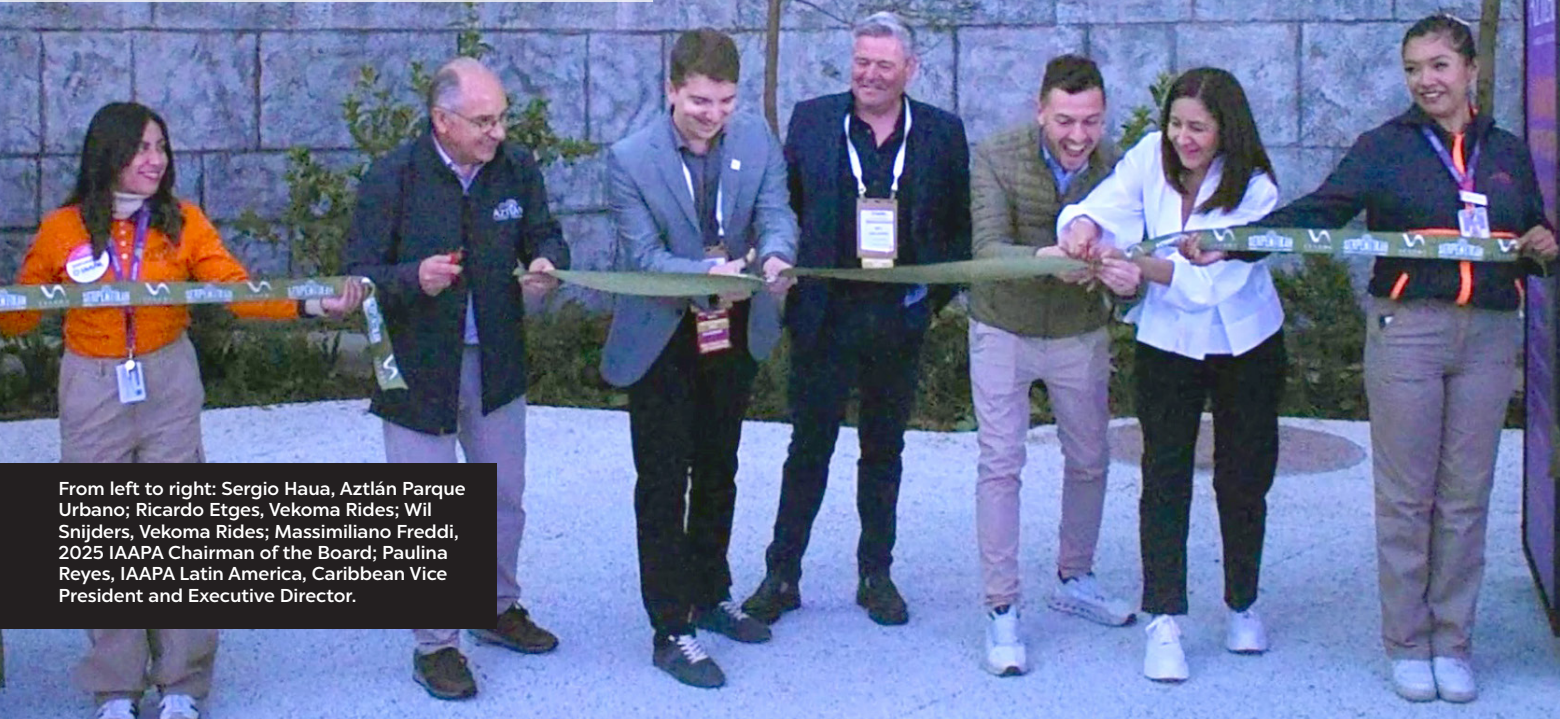
The Legend of Quetzalcoatl

Serpentikah at Aztlán Parque Urbano in Mexico City pays homage to Mexican culture through its thematic design. The new roller coaster's inauguration created excitement in March during IAAPA Summit: Latin America, Caribbean with leaders from Aztlán, Vekoma, and IAAPA cutting the ribbon.

Serpentikah is one of Vekoma's largest suspended family coasters to date, with 569 meters of track and a top speed of 64 kilometers per hour. It's minimum height requirement of 1.05 meters makes the ride accessible for families with children.



ROBERTO BAEZ



From left to right: Sergio Haua, Aztlán Parque Urbano; Ricardo Etges, Vekoma Rides; Wil Snijders, Vekoma Rides; Massimiliano Freddi, 2025 IAAPA Chairman of the Board; Paulina Reyes, IAAPA Latin America, Caribbean Vice President and Executive Director.

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Launch



From left to right: Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi, Group CEO of Miral and Member of the IAAPA Board of Directors; His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Chairman at Miral; Bob Iger, Chief Executive Officer, The Walt Disney Company; Josh D'Amaro, Chairman, Disney Experiences.

EXPANSION

A Whole New World: Miral and Disney Partner to Create New Park in Abu Dhabi

New theme park to rise
on Yas Island

by Scott Fais with Hani Haraty

MICKY PLANS TO PLACE A STAKE IN THE SAND.

On May 7, Miral and Disney Experiences announced a partnership to bring a new Disney-inspired theme park to Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The announcement came during a 15th anniversary celebration for Yas Island.

The property will be developed, financed, and built by Miral, while Disney Experiences will lead the design efforts and assist with operations.

His Excellency Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, chairman, Dept. of Culture and Tourism Abu Dhabi and Miral, played with the audience amassed at the W Abu Dhabi hotel when announcing the news: "I have a special guest with me. But as soon as I tell you who it is, you will know what we will announce today..." pausing just long enough to allow laughter from the crowd to build before Disney CEO Bob Iger took the stage.

"In the 102-year history of the Walt Disney Company, there have been many defining moments and countless achievements," Iger told the crowd to thunderous applause as he announced the company's seventh theme park resort. Iger says the new property will "blend wonderful Disney stories and characters with the cultures and tastes" of the UAE and the Middle East. →



MIRAL

A rendering of what the new Disney attraction may look like in Abu Dhabi.

“It will serve as an oasis for extraordinary entertainment and experiences for millions and millions of people in this crossroads of the world,” Iger says. He shared the new park’s architecture will be modern and infused with cutting-edge technology.


In a post on LinkedIn, Miral wrote the new park will be “the most advanced Disney theme park ever built.” Iger says Walt Disney Imagineering is already working on designing a theme park that will offer “unique and immersive experiences in very modern ways.” The park will be built on a plot of land bordering Yas Island’s waterfront. The Disney CEO confirmed in an interview on ABC’s “Good Morning America” television program that the new park will indeed have a castle, but it will be a modern take on a Disney fortress.

Mohamed Abdalla Al Zaabi, group CEO of Miral, wrote on LinkedIn, “it has always been my dream to serve my country and contribute; no matter how small, to its progress and growth.”

It has not yet been shared if the new park will be built indoors, like other Miral

theme parks on Yas Island, including Ferrari World Abu Dhabi (opened in 2010), Warner Bros. World Abu Dhabi (2018), and SeaWorld Abu Dhabi (2023). The average summer high temperature on Yas Island is 107°F/42°C.

The new park in the UAE will be Disney’s seventh global theme park resort. An opening date is still to be determined.

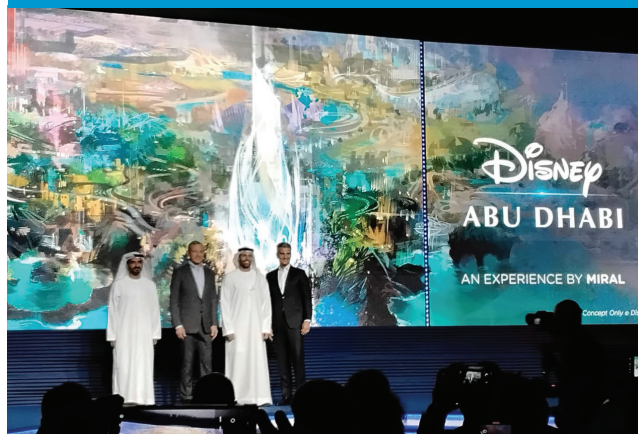
“Abu Dhabi’s vision for the future is to create a legacy for generations to come,” concludes His Excellency. 



Explore Abu Dhabi for yourself during IAAPA Expo Middle East 2026, March 30-April 2. From networking to benchmarking, the global attractions industry will come together in the United Arab Emirates to make new contacts, source innovative products, and learn best practices at EDUTours. Learn more at IAAPA.org/ExpoMiddleEast

Inside Disney’s International Operation

Read Funworld’s exclusive interview with Jill Estorino, the president and managing director of Disney Parks International. Estorino shares insight, thought leadership, and advice for busy attractions professionals. Turn to p. 46.



HANI HARARY

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REVENUE GENERATION

SWEET NEW OPENINGS

Something sweet is brewing at Utah's **Lagoon Amusement Park**. Two new shops, **Carousel Candy** and **Peacock Parlour** ice cream shop, opened to the public for the 2025 season.

"We wanted to take everything up a notch," says **Julie Freed**, the park's director of special events. "The carousel horses in the windows of the candy shop are ones that we've had a long time and have been hoping to use, and we've never had an ice cream shop quite like this, where we make our own gelato. We even have an ice cream flavor designed just for us—it'll be sold in stores and called Peacock Punch." There are also plans for the vacant space upstairs to be used for private parties.



LAGOON

2

NEW AND NOTABLE

NEW NAME IN GERMANY

The famed **Expedition GeForce** (below) will soon have a new home. While the ride isn't moving, **Holiday Park Germany** is moving forward with a name change: **Plopsaland Germany**. On June 28, Plopsa Group—owner of the facility since 2010—will rename the property. The rebranding brings the park's name in line with other Plopsa-owned attractions in Europe that incorporate a geographical location into its name.



PLOPSA

MEOW IN JAPAN

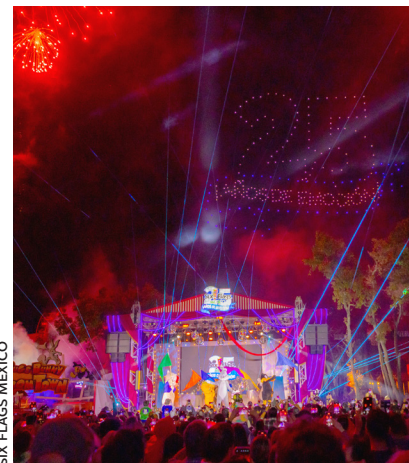
The cat's out of the bag. Hoping to benefit from traffic going to the **World Expo** in Osaka that opened on April 13, Oita Airport in western Japan has renamed itself **Oita Hello Kitty Airport**. Oita Prefecture is home to the **Harmonyland** theme park celebrating the feline character. The airport created a photo spot where passengers can take selfies and visit a **Hello Kitty** gift store.



SANRIO ENTERTAINMENT CO.

FIESTA MEXICO

Six Flags Mexico kicked off the park's 25th anniversary in March with a three-month celebration. On a daily basis, the park presented 13 shows and a parade with eight new floats accompanied by more than 40 dancers. Once the sun set, **Essence: Spectacular Night** included cirque-style performers on stage with 300 drones overhead that joined together for a finale with pyro.



SIX FLAGS MEXICO

3 TRENDING FEELING JELLY

Slow and steady is popular. Two attractions recently opened jellyfish exhibits. Owned by **Herschend**, the **Newport Aquarium's** new **Jellies: Go with the Flow** exhibit features a 1,700-square-foot habitat home to more than 100 jellyfish from six unique species. Meanwhile, **SeaWorld San Diego** opened **Jewels of the Sea: The Jellyfish Experience**, a first-of-its-kind attraction at **SeaWorld Parks** with three distinct galleries, more than 15 aquariums, and a fully interactive LED gallery.



UNITED PARKS

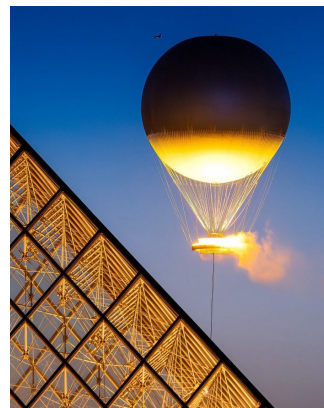


NEWPORT AQUARIUM

4 INNOVATIONS RELIGHTING PARIS' TORCH

The night sky above Paris will again glow as the **Olympic Cauldron** will be relit June 21 to Sept. 14 and summers beyond. The prominent symbol of the Paris Olympic Games will be reinstalled each summer until Los Angeles hosts the **Summer Olympics in 2028**. A

product of **Aerophile**, the balloon soars 60 meters above Paris from sunset until 2 a.m. The flame effect is 100% electric, produced by water and light effects.

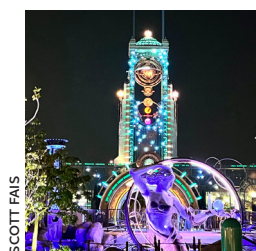


AEROPHILE

5 RIBBON CUTTING SOMETHING EPIC OPENS

The portals are now open. After two months of team member technical rehearsals and guest previews, **Universal Epic Universe** is slated to open May 22.

Universal Orlando gave **Funworld** an early sneak peek at the new park. Scan the QR codes below to watch a 90 second preview of each of the five new worlds.



SCOTT FAIS

Celestial Park

This central hub offers a racing roller coaster through the stars, delectable cuisine, and imaginative merchandise.



UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

Super Nintendo World

Slide through the iconic green pipe into the world of Super Mario Bros. and Donkey Kong.



UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

Dark Universe

Darkmoor is a grim world full of the myth and mystery of classic Universal Monsters.



UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

The Wizarding World of Harry Potter – Ministry of Magic

A hidden, bustling 1920s Paris is home to a next-generation dark ride experience.



UNIVERSAL ORLANDO

How to Train Your Dragon – Isle of Berk

An energetic village perched above churning seas, where guests embark on Viking adventures.



HAVE A DISPATCH FROM THE FIELD?

Have a Dispatch from the field? Share your 2025 successes, wins, and innovations with Funworld. Send news and photos to FunworldWorks@IAAPA.org



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS JAPAN AND NINTENDO

Donkey Kong Swings into Universal Studios Japan

Fans of the classic video game Donkey Kong can now take a wild ride on Mine Cart Madness, an innovative coaster that is the heart of Universal Studios Japan's Donkey Kong Country.

"It is truly emotional to see the world of 'Donkey Kong,' which started from the game arcades in 1981, brought to life here at Universal Studios Japan," shares Shigeru Miyamoto, the legendary game designer behind the Donkey Kong franchise.

The two-minute ride, housed within the Golden Temple, launches guests from a barrel cannon to help Donkey Kong and

Diddy Kong protect the Golden Banana from the Tiki Tak Tribe. Using a hidden rail, the coaster creates the illusion of mine carts jumping over broken track, mimicking the video game's signature moves.

The Donkey Kong Country expansion of USJ's Super Nintendo World also features an interactive rhythm game, creative retail, specialty food offerings, and character meet-and-greets with Donkey Kong.

usj.co.jp

Electric Vehicle Maker BYD Opens High-Tech Museum in China

Carmaker BYD rolled into the attractions industry with the opening of China's first museum dedicated to electric vehicles. The 15,000-square-meter space in Zhengzhou, Henan province, is also home to BYD's substantial manufacturing base.

The Di Space Museum offers visitors an immersive exploration of electric mobility innovation. With more than 300 exhibits across four floors, the museum showcases the engineering that drives EVs, new innovations, and a look at BYD's corporate culture. Interactive displays allow visitors to engage with cutting-edge battery technology while themed areas highlight sustainable transportation solutions.

Twenty-six Christie Inspire Series laser projectors, installed by Jianye Display, power the museum's visual displays.



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KYNREN - THE STORIED LANDS

England's Kynren Reveals Time-Traveling Theme Park

Kynren – An Epic Tale of England, the historical spectacle staged against the backdrop of Auckland Palace in County Durham, North East England, is expanding. Kynren – The Storied Lands, a daytime theme park, will join the nighttime show. The new venue is projected to open in summer 2026.

"This is a game-changer for us and for the U.K. visitor experience market," Kynren CEO Anna Warnecke says. "For the past decade, we have poured passion and expertise into delivering Kynren – An Epic Tale of England, and now we are bringing that same level of scale, innovation, and magic into this new day-time attraction."

11Arches, the charity that operates Kynren, plans to bring more adventures and stories to life, including The Lone Centurion, Tales of the Tudors, Conquest of the Seas, Excalibur, and Robin Hood. The Kynren – An Epic Tale of England show will continue Saturday nights during the summer with a 1,000-person cast and crew of volunteers.

"A decade on, Kynren is one of the wonders of the North East," says Jonathan Ruffer, founder of 11Arches. The show's success is the springboard for the new park's opening next year.

11arches.com

Lego and Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum Harness Flower Power

Look close. That's not paint on Vincent van Gogh's famous 1889 "Sunflowers" painting, housed in Amsterdam's Van Gogh Museum. The Lego Group and the museum have joined forces to create a 2,615-piece set that allows Lego builders to do exactly that.

To celebrate the set's 2025 launch, the Lego Group has created two brick replicas of the painting for permanent display at the Van Gogh Museum and the Lego Store in



Amsterdam. The Van Gogh Museum also plans to host activities throughout the year to mark the debut. To make the experience accessible to all, a virtual tour will enable Lego enthusiasts worldwide to enjoy the installation from their own homes. Fans of the project will also be able to listen to a podcast about its development.

Rob Groot, managing director of the Van Gogh Museum, is delighted with the endeavor. "We hope this Lego set will inspire and engage new audiences with the art and life story of Vincent van Gogh."

vangoghmuseum.nl

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TEAMLAB

teamLab Launches Interactive Art Showcase in Abu Dhabi

teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi, which opened on April 18, brings large-scale immersive art to the United Arab Emirates in a 17,000-square-meter art showcase. Art collective teamLab blends art, science, and technology to create sensory-rich worlds for guests to explore.

Art lovers will discover experiential artworks including Massless Suns and Dark Suns, where spheres of light and darkness play with visitors' perceptions of reality. Visitors who touch the light of a sphere will send rays of light rippling outwards. The haunting Levitation Void—an exhibit that people can push—hovers freely in the air. The silhouetted orb may move or fall but will always recover and rise again.

Miral Experiences, a subsidiary of Miral, will operate teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi in the city's Saadiyat Cultural District. HE Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, chairman of the Department of Culture and Tourism—Abu Dhabi, says, "teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi will offer an immersive journey that sparks infinite curiosity and imagination in all who visit."

teamlababudhabi.com



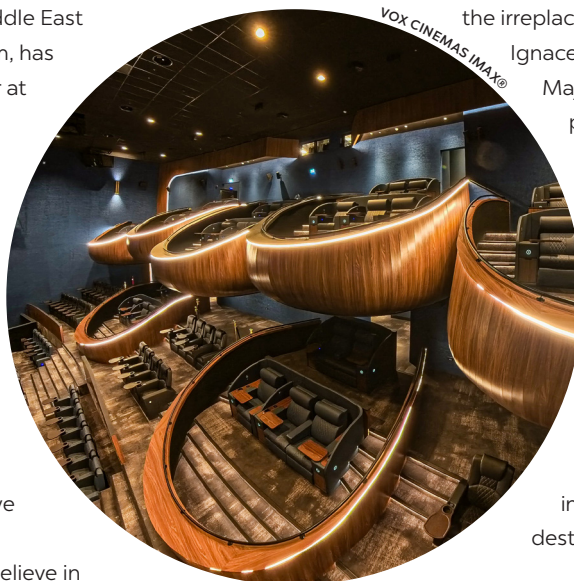
Experience teamLab Phenomena Abu Dhabi during IAAPA Expo Middle East 2026 taking place March 30 – April 2.

Vox Cinemas Redefines Premium Moviegoing with Dubai IMAX Debut

Vox Cinemas, the cinema arm of Middle East entertainment giant Majid Al Futtaim, has debuted a spectacular IMAX theater at Dubai's Mall of the Emirates.

The new theater combines IMAX technology with a custom-built auditorium featuring Ōma Cinema premium pod seating, pioneered by French architect Pierre Chican. The seven elevated Theatre Pods—a first in an IMAX theater—combine a private escape with cinematic immersion, gourmet dining, and personalized service. Each pod accommodates five guests.

"In an age of streaming, we still believe in

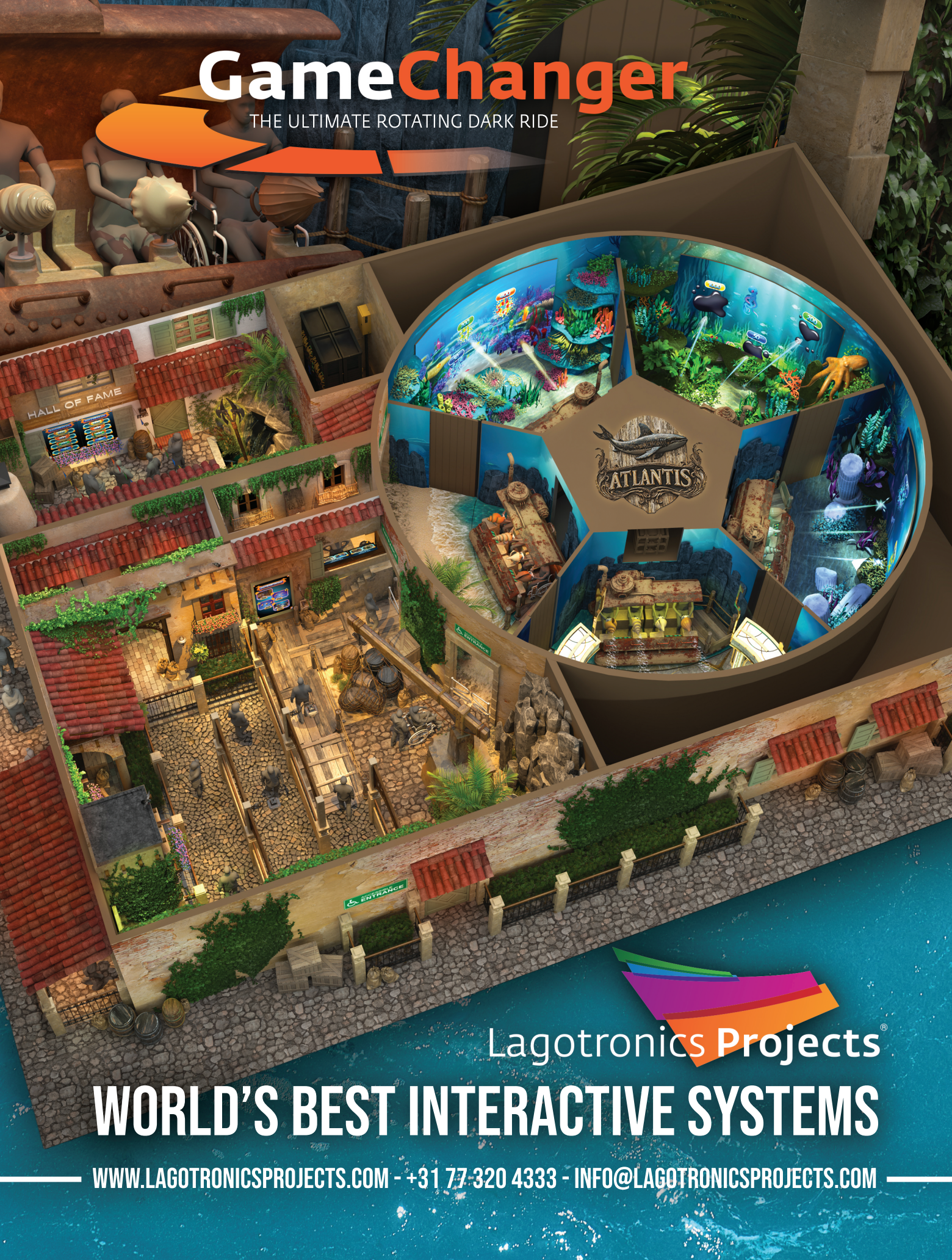


the irreplaceable magic of the big screen," says Ignace Lahoud, chief executive officer of Majid Al Futtaim Entertainment. "We're proud to offer what we believe is the best IMAX screen in the world. But this is just the beginning. We're committed to enhancing every aspect of our flagship cinema, with the next phase focusing on the Kids Cinema and social areas. Our ongoing transformation at Mall of the Emirates is meticulously designed to serve our guests, while enhancing this world-class entertainment destination."

majidalfuttaim.com | voxcinemas.com

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SERVICIO NACIONAL DE PATRIMONIO CULTURAL CHILE

Easter Island's New Museum Design Unveiled

The Chilean National Cultural Heritage Service has announced the winning design for the new Rapa Nui Museum, a landmark project blending tradition and modernity in the territory also known as Easter Island.

The selected design incorporates the use of laminated wood and reinforced concrete and evokes the shapes of the Polynesian canoes that honor Rapa Nui founding stories. Conceived by architects Nicolás Vivar Machicao, Diego González Zeman, Eduardo Tapia Vargas, and Carmen Benítez Merino, the museum project will include a botanical garden, an

astronomical observatory, and communal areas, allowing the space to serve as a cultural and educational hub.

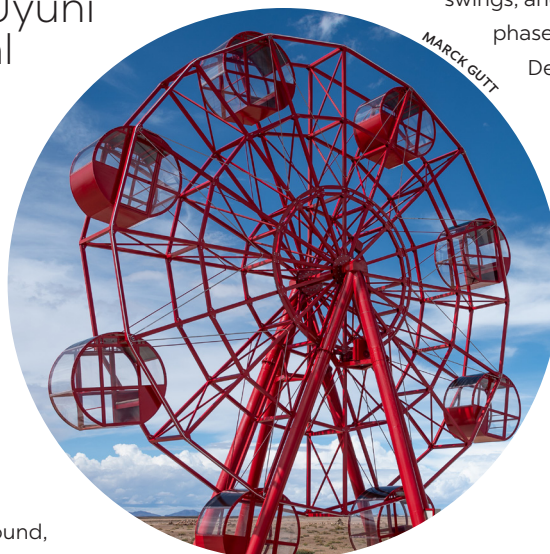
Carolina Arredondo, undersecretary of the National Cultural Heritage Service, emphasized the museum's role in preserving Rapa Nui's identity and history. The initiative aligns with ongoing efforts to repatriate cultural artifacts. The winning team will receive 50 million Chilean pesos and participate in the project's design consultancy, with total funding of 610 million Chilean pesos.

museorapanui.gob.cl

Bolivia's Salar de Uyuni Welcomes Cultural Theme Park

Located in Bolivia's Andean highlands, Salar de Uyuni is renowned for its status as one of the world's largest salt flats. The list of attractions in the region includes a salt labyrinth, a wildlife reserve, and now, a new theme park.

Opened in March, Sueños y Leyendas (Dreams and Legends) features a carousel, a Ferris wheel, a trampoline area, a children's playground,



swings, and table football. The second and third phases of the project, planned for a July and December debut, will incorporate a vegetable garden, live music, traditional dance performances, and demonstrations of local artisan techniques.

Adjacent to Hidalgo Corporation's Palacio de Sal Hotel, Sueños y Leyendas welcomes both resort guests and visitors. With an estimated \$2 million investment, the project aims to enhance tourism offerings while immersing travelers in the region's rich culture, history, and traditions.

palaciodesal.com.bo/es/suenosyleyendas

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DREAMWORLD

Australia's Dreamworld Rivertown Takes Flight

Riders on Dreamworld's new Jungle Rush roller coaster experience a dozen airtime moments and unexpected surprises thanks to an innovative inclined triple-switch turntable. The element enables trains on the Vekoma-designed coaster to switch tracks and change direction. The 25-meter high, 175-ton steel ride anchors the resort's Rivertown development and is Dreamworld's largest single-attraction investment to date.

"Rivertown is more than just a new precinct—it's a testament to Dreamworld's dedication to the Gold Coast's tourism, local employment, and economy," explains Dreamworld CEO Greg Yong.

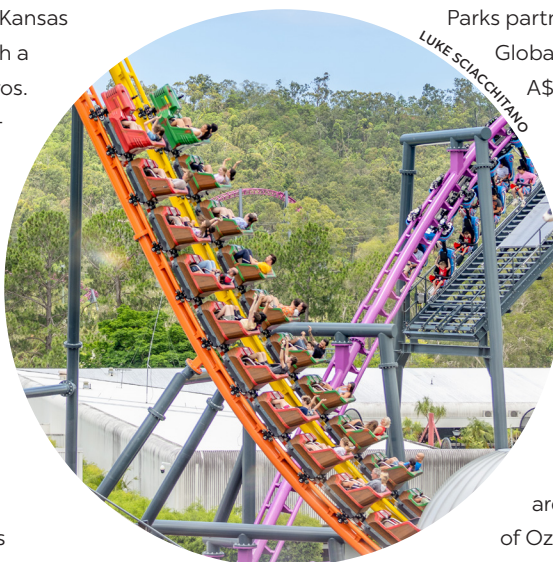
The multimillion-dollar themed zone also features a family-friendly car ride named Murrissippi Motors (pictured above) and an immersive jungle-themed dining experience with animatronic animals, including a talking parrot and mischievous monkeys. Rivertown's crowning centerpiece is a historic Royal Australian Air Force plane, the Caribou A4-179, which arrived at Dreamworld with a storied history. The aircraft saw service during the Vietnam War when it became a symbol of endurance. Quick thinking by its crew saved the plane and its passengers following an engine failure during a flood relief effort.

dreamworld.com.au/our-worlds/rivertown

The Gold Coast Welcomes The Wizard

Towering 22 meters above the Yellow Brick Road, riders on two dueling tracks of the Kansas Twister roller coaster weave through a technicolor landscape in Warner Bros. Movie World's newest themed precinct, The Wizard of Oz.

The unique Kansas Twister boomerang racer sends guests forward and backward at speeds up to 58 km per hour. Vekoma Rides engineered both Kansas Twister and its companion attraction, Flight of the Wicked Witch, a suspended roller coaster that creates a soaring sensation as riders picture themselves flying alongside the Wicked Witch's winged monkeys.



Several years in the making, Village Roadshow Theme Parks partnered with Warner Bros. Discovery Global Experiences and Pico Play to bring this A\$50 million vision to life. Nearly 100 artists and engineers at Pico Play's Malaysian fabrication facility meticulously crafted scenes that transport visitors from sepia-toned Kansas to the vibrant land of Oz. The design ethos in the themed realm mirrors the 1939 film's groundbreaking use of color. Guests walking through the new land at Warner Bros. Movie World transition from earth tones to monochrome in the Witch's Wasteland area before bursting into the bright hues of Oz.

movieworld.com.au/attractions/wizard-of-oz

**More than 150 Towers
installed worldwide!**

INTERACTIVE FAMILY RIDES

From individually themed attractions to overall concepts





SIX FLAGS OVER GEORGIA

Six Flags Over Georgia Strikes Gold with New Roller Coaster

Six Flags Over Georgia's new Georgia Gold Rusher roller coaster celebrates Georgia's gold rush history with a high-speed adventure. The ride's 590 feet of U-shaped track features free-spinning gondola seating, dynamic water features, a 144-foot peak, and speeds up to 60 miles per hour.

The ride harkens back to Georgia's 1885 gold rush by telling the story of gold prospector William "Willy" Gibson and his hydraulic mining machine through immersive theming and decor.

The coaster by Intamin was first announced in summer 2023 during the park's inaugural Coaster Fest event. Fans

then submitted more than 2,500 suggestions for names.

Following the merger of Six Flags and Cedar Fair in July 2024, the creative minds at the new company's Experience Design and Creative Studio (XDS) got to work refining the yet-to-open coaster's color and theme. By connecting the new ride to the neighboring Dahlonega Mine Train coaster (opened in 1967 by Arrow Dynamics), XDS created a cohesive theme.

sixflags.com/overgeorgia

» Watch Funworld's video report on the Georgia Gold Rusher here:



Seattle's Woodland Park Zoo Enters the Reptile Realm

Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle opened its new Reptile Realm habitat, celebrating the forests of Southeast Asia and Oceania. Guests will come face-to-face with reptiles and amphibians native to a variety of habitats, including the mangrove swamps of the Aru, the Sula Islands of Indonesia, and tropical forests on the Solomon Islands.



Animal species on display in the Reptile Realm include the Timor python, Asian forest tortoise, Quince monitor, Solomon Islands leaf frog, and Komodo dragon. "We are so excited to have our new Reptile Realm open and full of incredible creatures," says Erin Sullivan, animal curator for the Woodland Park Zoo. "Reptiles are often misunderstood, and this exhibit is an amazing space for us to foster empathy for these scaly friends and teach guests about the vital role each of them plays in our world."

zoo.org



MÉLISSA DUPONT

Dinosaur-Themed Attraction Expected to Roar into Action in Morocco

The Moroccan Agency for Tourism Development (SMIT) is currently inviting investors to embark on an exciting venture: Dinoparc, a dinosaur-themed discovery and leisure park in Morocco's Beni Mellal-Khénifra region.

SMIT is seeking investors to develop Dinoparc with a total investment of 100 million Moroccan dirhams. Designed as a multifaceted experience, Dinoparc will feature three main zones: The Valley of the Dinosaurs, where visitors can engage with life-sized reconstructions and interactive exhibits;

LuDino Parc, an entertainment area offering diverse leisure activities; and Atlas Village, a miniature representation of the surrounding UNESCO-designated Global Geopark.

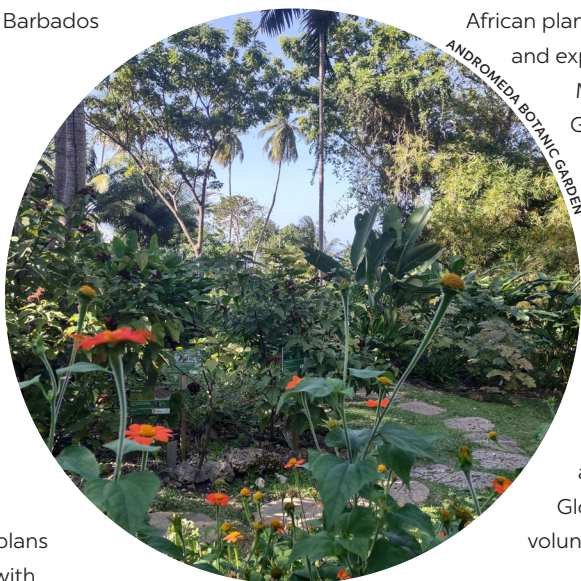
Blending education with entertainment, the park's immersive design will cater to visitors of all ages, appealing to both domestic and international markets. Positioned as a premier adventure and family tourism destination, Dinoparc will enhance the region's appeal by leveraging its UNESCO status and established infrastructure.

<https://smit.gov.ma/dino-parc/>

Barbados Botanic Gardens Expands Accessibility and Cultural Offerings

The Andromeda Botanic Gardens in Barbados continues to evolve with two major projects enhancing accessibility and cultural engagement.

Inaugurated in December 2024 and featuring wide, leveled pathways connecting visitors to the reception area, Rochelle's Garden provides the first wheelchair-accessible space in the venue. Andromeda Botanic Gardens features community gathering spaces, pollinator havens, propagating areas, and medicinal plant exhibits tied to Barbadian traditions. Future plans include a woodland walk, a garden with



African plants that have influenced Barbados, and expanded accessibility.

Meanwhile, the Ethnobotanical Garden honors Barbados' rich plant heritage while creating wildlife habitats. Developed on 1.5 acres of unused bush, the Bds\$190,000 project was made possible with the support of multiple organizations, including the Peter Boos Family Foundation, University of the West Indies, and Dr. Sonia Peter, along with the Sandals Foundation, GlobalResolve, and community volunteers.

andromedabarbados.com

New Leadership Team at Indoor Active Brands

Indoor Active Brands (IAB)—the parent company of Altitude Trampoline Park, The Pickle Pad, and Crave Social Eatery—is shaking up its leadership team. **Chris Kuehn**, who joined IAB as its chief operating officer a year ago and has previously held C-level positions with global brands like Yum! and Arby's, is IAB's new president, reporting directly to the board. **Sean Naughton**, who has more than 20 years' experience in family entertainment finance, is the new chief financial officer. **Robert Morris** takes on the role of vice president of franchise development and Joseph Steen becomes the company's vice president of technology.



INDOOR ACTIVE BRANDS



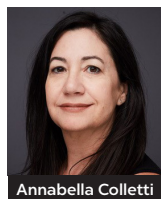
INDOOR ACTIVE BRANDS



INDOOR ACTIVE BRANDS

New VP of Business Operations at Adirondack

Annabella Colletti is **Adirondack Studios'** new vice president of business operations. She brings a proven track record of streamlining operations and driving growth, as well as more than 20 years' experience, including 16 years at InMotion Entertainment. "I'm eager to strengthen and develop our departments and processes so teams can focus on imagination over administration," she says. Colletti's responsibilities include overseeing administration, contracts, human resources, and information technology at Adirondack Studios, which provides professional scenic design and fabrication for attractions and cultural destinations.



ADIRONDACK STUDIOS

Mini Melts USA Selects New Chief Operating Officer

Jerry Law is the new chief operating officer at **Mini Melts USA**, a company making ice cream novelties. Law has more than 30 years of experience in the frozen food industry, including leadership positions at Real Good Foods and J&J Snack Foods. As COO, Law manages operations across 25 distribution centers and supports the company's expansion into amusement parks and sporting arenas.



MINI MELTS OF AMERICA

Kingsmen Creatives Names New Group Chief Executive

Anthony Chong Siew Ling is **Kingsmen Creatives'** new group chief executive. Chong takes over from Andrew Cheng, who is retiring after eight years in the role and 16 years at Kingsmen. Cheng retains an advisory position with the Singapore-listed company that "transforms ideas into stories" and whose clients

include major theme parks, museums, and other attractions. Chong has more than 40 years' experience with Kingsmen and has previously served as the company's group managing director for Exhibitions & Thematic and as its CEO-Designate.



KINGSMEN CREATIVES

New Managing Director at West Midlands Safari Park

Joanne Hammick is the new managing director of the United Kingdom's **West Midlands Safari Park**. Hammick brings more than 20 years of hospitality leadership experience to her new role. She is the first woman to lead the park in its 52-year history. "We will continue to focus on the park's commitment to sustainability and wildlife preservation while creating even more engaging experiences for our guests," Hammick says. "The future is filled with opportunity." The safari park recently unveiled a comprehensive rebranding, along with the launch of new attractions, including the Jungle Jeeps family ride, an expanded African Walking Trail featuring cheetahs, and new hippo and wild dog lodges.



WEST MIDLANDS SAFARI PARK

Managing Director Appointed at Triotech

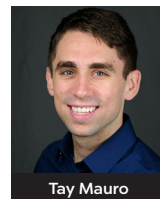
Yannick Gemme is the new managing director of the product division at **Triotech**. With extensive experience in the attractions industry, Gemme steps into this role eager to drive innovation and expand the company's portfolio of interactive attractions. "We have some amazing new games in the pipeline and truly believe our best is still ahead of us," Gemme says. "The future is bright, and I can't wait to continue pushing the boundaries together." In his new role, he will lead the development of next-generation interactive experiences, reinforcing Triotech's commitment to immersive and engaging attractions.



TRIOTECH

New Director of Revenue Management at Merlin Entertainments

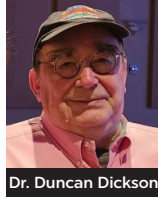
Tay Mauro is the new director of revenue management for North America at **Merlin Entertainments**. In this role, Mauro will lead admissions and hotel revenue efforts for Legoland, Madame Tussauds, Sea Life aquariums, Lego Discovery Centers, Peppa Pig Theme Parks, and The Orlando Eye. "If you happen to know me, you know that I love a good theme park, and that's why I am beyond stoked to be joining Merlin Entertainments," Mauro shares on LinkedIn. With more than 30 Merlin attractions across the U.S., Mauro looks forward to enhancing revenue strategies and guest experiences for the global entertainment leader, which welcomes more than 60 million visitors annually.



TAY MAURO

Dr. Duncan Dickson

Dr. Duncan Dickson, who passed away on Dec. 30, 2024, made a lasting impact on the attractions industry through his shared wisdom. A respected faculty member of UCF Rosen College's Department of Tourism, Events, Entertainment, and Attractions from 1997 to 2019, Dickson played a pivotal role in shaping theme park and attraction education. His extensive experience, including two decades of executive leadership at Walt Disney World from 1976 to 1995, brought comprehensive industry expertise to his teaching. As a longtime advisory board member, he shared valuable insights that advanced the college's mission and inspired future hospitality leaders.



CARRISA BAKER

Dr. Duncan Dickson

community boards and initiatives, including the resort's Board of Zoning Appeals and the Ocean City Arts Advisory Board.

Stephan Pastusak

Stephan Pastusak's impact on the amusement industry was as profound as his commitment to family and community. As vice president of Jolly Roger Amusement Park and Bayshore Development, he played a pivotal role in shaping memorable guest experiences. Pastusak's legacy will continue to inspire those who strive to bring happiness to others through the development of family-oriented experiences and amusement parks.

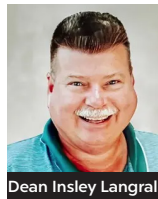


DAWN DILLON

Stephan Pastusak

Dean Insley Langrall

Dean Insley Langrall, a dynamic presence in the attractions and entertainment industry, passed away on Feb. 1, 2024, at the age of 68. After a successful sales and marketing career, including 18 years with Comcast, Langrall found his professional passion as special projects director and sales and marketing consultant for Jolly Roger Amusement Park, a role he fondly described as the pinnacle of his career. His contributions to Ocean City's tourism landscape extended beyond his attractions role, with Langrall serving on numerous

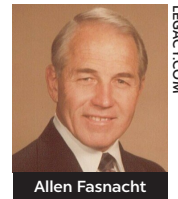


EASTERN SHORE CREMATION AND FUNERAL

Dean Insley Langrall

Allen Fasnacht

Allen Fasnacht dedicated his life to bringing joy to others through his work at Funland in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, where he spent more than 60 years fostering a welcoming and family-friendly atmosphere. His leadership extended beyond the business, as he mentored hundreds of employees with a commitment to fairness and hard work. A true pillar of his community, Fasnacht's impact was felt not just in the park but in the lives of the guests, employees, and colleagues he inspired.



LEGACY.COM

Allen Fasnacht

by Michael Switow **Manufacturer & Supplier News** LAUNCH

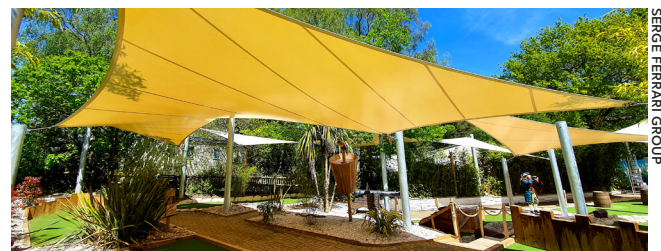
BoldMove Crafts Santa Claus' Trackless Sleigh

BoldMove has unveiled a trackless sleigh for a smooth and magical ride. The **Rogue Rides** system operates without fixed tracks or predefined routes, eliminating the need for floor drilling. The vehicles use custom-designed wheels with angled rollers that enable skid, drift, rotation, and sideways movements. Equipped with Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) technology, they navigate precisely in indoor spaces by referencing a detailed digital map that is suitable for complex dark ride attractions. In addition to Santa's sleigh, Rogue Rides vehicles, seat fabrics, and lap bars can be customized to match a desired theme.

boldmove-nation.com/rogue-rides



BOLDMOVE NATION



SERGE FERRARI GROUP

Sustainable Outdoor Shading from Serge Ferrari Group

Attractions have a new environmentally friendly option for umbrellas and awnings. **Serge Ferrari Group** has redesigned its **Soltis 502 Proof** line of fabrics with 100% recycled yarn. The company says the move reduces its carbon footprint by nearly 30%. The updated line includes 13 new colors, including Spruce and Thistle Blue, bringing the total number of color options to 33. Despite these improvements, the company reports it has not increased prices. Soltis 502 Proof was first used by outdoor venues in 2009. "We look forward to leading the industry by providing beautiful and quality products that set the bar for environmentally conscious, high-performance membranes," says Serge Ferrari Group Market Manager Jean-Bernard Coulanges.

sergeferrari.com

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AquaAdventure



Helix Twist



AquaForms + Mini Blaster



Wall Runner

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Industry Insights



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Dominic Audet: Crafting Immersive Worlds of Wonder

IN 2001, DOMINIC AUDET was amid a successful career providing audiovisual services for major corporate events and other projects. A lifelong technology tinkerer, he enjoyed the work, but discovered his true passion through an after-hours gig where he organized rave parties. Perched next to the DJ, Audet complemented the music by creating visuals that set the mood and transfixed the crowd. The experience proved so inspiring that Audet walked away from his job and joined forces with Sakchin Bessette, whom he met through Montreal's rave scene, to co-found Moment Factory.

"It was a leap of faith," says Audet. "I decided that I would work with my friends that share the same passion. I was going to quit everything and be part of an art collective."

A funny thing happened, however. The art collective struck a chord, and Moment Factory found an eager audience for its trippy multimedia experiences at parks, malls, museums, cultural heritage sites, and other attractions.

I first encountered Moment Factory's work ambling through a forest high in the Smoky Mountains that was bathed in otherworldly montages of light and effects. The surreal Astra Lumina at Anakeesta in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, one of a series of Lumina-branded night walks from the company, is transportive. To me, the display represents a new form of storytelling and entertainment.

Founded just as digital technology began replacing the analog standard, Audet says that Moment Factory has leveraged its artistic potential to incorporate innovations, such as projection mapping and LED lighting into its presentations. While the work is created using computers, it is meant to be experienced live, not virtually, and in the company of others.



IMAGES COURTESY OF MOMENT FACTORY



"Wonder through art" is how Audet describes Moment Factory's new-age installations. "Our focus always has been and always will be collective human connection. It's a sort of communion, almost spiritual moments that we share together," Audet adds.

He may no longer be creating video content for local raves, but Audet and his team are still creating moods and casting spells on crowds by conjuring alluring lighting, media, and soundscapes. They recently worked on Les Abysses de Lumière at Aquascope in France and the Kaleidoscope Kavern Lazy River at Wilderness at the Smokies in Tennessee. Both projects immerse guests in fanciful, wildly colorful environments that are unlike anything found at other indoor water parks.

Calling back to Audet's origins, Moment Factory also develops media and lighting production for touring artists such as Billie Eilish, Kiss, and The Killers. Capping a longstanding collaboration with Phish, the company produced the eye-popping visuals for the jam band's residency at the Sphere in Las Vegas. Creating on-the-fly media for the world's largest and highest resolution LED display to complement Phish's rambling, improvisational songs before an audience of 17,600 fans was like supporting the ultimate rave—and creating a massive, communal moment of wonder for Audet. **FW**



ABOVE: Dominic Audet, Moment Factory co-founder and chief of innovation.

TOP: Les Abysses de Lumière at Aquascope water park in France.

LEFT: Astra Lumina night walk.



A lifelong park fanatic, **Arthur Levine** first started writing newspaper and magazine features about the industry he loves in 1992. He produces his own Substack newsletter, "Arthur's About Theme Parks" at **AboutThemeParks.fun**



Fire Prevention Preps: Aiming for the Best

IMAGINE A TYPICAL OPERATING DAY, when suddenly, an attraction's smoke detection systems trigger ride vehicles to halt and staff begins evacuation procedures. The result is no loss of life, no injuries, and damage is minimal. The playbook for such an event exists—and so does the technology to prevent a disaster.

Engineer Thomas Knecht, managing director at Knecht GmbH & Co., is a fire prevention expert who has worked with attractions across Europe to reduce their risk of fire. He recommends that attractions conduct a thorough risk analysis—before an emergency.

“Only when the specific fire hazards of an attraction are known, can effective and targeted safety measures be developed,” says Knecht.

Knecht believes the number one objective is to adopt a customized, goal-oriented fire protection strategy that integrates structural, technical, and organizational measures without compromising guest experience. This includes limited self-rescue options for guests onboard a ride and identifying potential fire threats that may extend from theming elements and sensitive control systems. The concept of “self-rescue” is defined as enabling guests to evacuate themselves in emergencies where possible, with the understanding that “while true self-rescue may not be possible, a well-prepared assisted evacuation can achieve a similarly high safety standard,” says Knecht.

To optimize evacuation opportunities, Knecht says attractions should create smoke-free evacuation zones equipped with high-performance smoke extraction systems, emergency lighting, and strategically placed unlocking tools that are readily available for trained staff.

To further reduce risks, he recommends the installation of modern fire detection systems with intelligent incident response logic and the creation of fire-resistant barriers between sections of attractions and/or around electrical rooms.



THOMAS KNECHT

For fire mitigation, he recommends gas-based extinguishing systems and redundant power systems. All measures, Knecht insists, must be part of a holistic fire protection plan, along with regular staff training, the scheduling of drills, and continuous maintenance of fire protection systems, adding, “Risk assessments must be updated regularly to identify and minimize new threats early on.”


Hands on training is paramount, and scenarios must be realistic. “It moves beyond passive learning from textbooks, effectively linking theoretical knowledge to practical application and bridging the gap between classroom learning and the complexities of the real world,” says Mauritz Christiaan Janeke, senior director of health, safety, environment, and security for Miral Experiences, an operator of indoor theme parks located on Yas Island in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

Janeke explains Miral trainees gain practical experience in applying the PASS system (Pull, Aim, Squeeze, and Sweep) for fire extinguisher use in a virtual environment. In the past, this training was performed through a real-world demonstration that included discharging a fire extinguisher and using controlled flames—a curriculum that was a “one-off experience” lasting a mere few seconds. In today's VR programs, trainees can repeat scenarios until they're comfortable with the procedure and understand the real-world consequences, ensuring utmost preparation for real-world situations.

Janeke explains that beyond attractions, VR training provides department-specific simulations, such as kitchen fire scenarios for food and beverage staff, with custom modules for warehouse staff.

“Key benefits include enhanced engagement, improved knowledge retention through practical application, safe simulation of hazardous scenarios, and a cost-effective approach that caters to diverse learning requirements,” Janeke tells Funworld.

Knecht believes operators should collaborate with experienced fire protection planners and certified experts—especially those with specific experience in the attractions industry.

“A proven approach is interdisciplinary collaboration between park operations, engineers, fire safety specialists, and the local fire department. Only when all stakeholders are involved early can a practical and reliable evacuation concept be created,” concludes Knecht. 

Smoke extractors installed inside a ride, like this one found at Europa-Park in Rust, Germany, can gormandize smoke when activated in an emergency.



Michael Costello is the managing editor of Funworld at IAAPA. With 20 years working in the attractions industry, he has also volunteered in his free time with the National Amusement Park Historical Association. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).





by Michael Switow

In Conversation with Welby Altidor: Creativity and Immersive Experiences

AFTER MORE THAN 15 YEARS with Cirque de Soleil, Welby Altidor entered the world of experiential attractions seven years ago with Neon as the company's chief creative and innovation officer. The company's most recent project, Harry Potter: Visions of Magic is a massive walk-through experience at Singapore's Resorts World Sentosa that spans 40,000 square feet inside a gutted theater where surprises can be unlocked with the wave of a custom-made wand.

Altidor's conversation with Funworld appears below, condensed and edited for clarity.

What makes this Harry Potter experience stand out from others around the world?

The scale of the experience we created is unparalleled; it is the largest in the world. Compared to the touring show that started in Cologne, Germany, this space is double the square footage and in terms of volume, it's incomparable. But what makes it truly unique is that it's a bespoke installation. The venue was a theater—with seats, technical grids, box offices, and VIP sections—that we reimagined. We transformed it into a black box and then into the show. You wouldn't be able to just take the pieces and install them somewhere else. It has really been designed for this space.

What did you want to create with this Harry Potter experience?

We had two main objectives. First, when you think about Harry Potter and all those different worlds, you have an incredible amount of amazing art. The world-building that's been done in films is exceptional. While many experiences are one-to-one replicas of the film world, we wanted to create a more artistic interpretation. Second, we wanted to explore what it would feel like to enter a world where you



HARRY POTTER: VISIONS OF MAGIC

Harry Potter: Visions of Magic features sprawling screens and interactive experiences activated by wands in a repurposed theater space.

could feel like a wizard or witch. Very early on, we asked ourselves, "What would it feel like to receive a wand and create your own experience?"


As group chief creative officer, how would you describe your role in a project like this?

My role is to ask good questions, and silly questions, to make sure we think about maximum impact for guests and the company. In the creative process, there is often a voice that says, "don't say this," but my experience is that these questions can unlock a new route to create beautiful surprises.

You're a creative person working in a business environment. Do you ever feel constrained by budgets?

My philosophy is that constraint is the mother of creativity. Every limitation is an opportunity. Perhaps you read a book that was one of the most immersive experiences you've ever had, or you saw a film with so much CGI, it felt soulless. At Cirque, I learned that in show business, "show" comes before "business." You need a great show to do great business.

What is your biggest lesson from this project?

We plan for order, but need to prepare for chaos. There's an illusion that comes from having nice timelines and documents that show we're organized. But there will be surprises along the way that change the way we work. We never do enough preparation for chaos and we tend to always do more planning for order. 

harrypottlevisionsofmagic.com/sg/



Michael Switow is Funworld's Asia-Pacific correspondent. Michael highlights innovation, creativity and successful business models, along with the people driving the attractions industry. He is also a professional moderator and the co-author of business leadership books. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).



*by Jaclyn Greenberg*

Accessibility and Inclusion at the Forefront of Sustainability

How attractions make changes to ensure all guests feel welcome

BEYOND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS, sustainability's growing breadth includes accessibility and inclusion—an area of attention important to an attraction's longevity and success. A more inclusive park means no one is left out of the fun and more guests depart satisfied after enjoying an attraction or experience.

The management of American Dream mall and entertainment complex in East Rutherford, New Jersey, is tuned into the importance of accommodating everyone. The attraction hosts an All-Abilities Day, when the water park opens early for people with disabilities and sensory sensitivities. This allows these visitors to enjoy “quieter music, more lifeguards, a calmer wave pool, easier accessibility, and less of a crowd so everyone has a chance to participate and enjoy a less stressful day,” says Gregg Schwartz, public relations director at American Dream. Additional staff training allows the attraction to support everyone, including people with disabilities who want to surf on an adaptive surfboard or hit the slopes using a sitting ski at the facility's indoor skiing and snowboarding park, Big Snow.

At Roarr!, a dinosaur-themed adventure park in the United Kingdom, park staff are trained in British Sign Language. The park also offers a quiet room with sensory aids, and a nonbinary character featured in live shows who encourages engagement with children across the gender spectrum. Roarr! also offers step-free access throughout the park and essential companions are admitted free of charge.

Impressed guests at Roarr! have shared their experiences on social media. One post from a mother who visited the park with her son with a disability received 30,000 likes, more than 2,000 positive

MICHAEL COSTELLO

comments, and 5,900 shares, says park director Ben Francis. This type of publicity attracts a valuable demographic of visitors to Roarr! that may not be accustomed to experiencing inclusion as the norm.

At the Canadian Museum of Nature, the philosophy is “Nothing about us, without us,” explains Dan Smythe, head of media relations. The museum's initiatives support people with disabilities, “but they also have ripple effects to other communities and impact their overall experience and satisfaction levels when visiting the museum,” says Smythe. For example, ramps and elevators support guests who use mobility devices, but also those with injuries and families who may be tired at the end of the day.

The same is true at the Toronto Zoo, where accessible accommodations benefit the wider community. “We've opened up almost a kilometer of new accessible boardwalks, which brings our zoo together,” says Toronto Zoo CEO Dolf DeJong. “Whether you are a person in a wheelchair or a parent pushing a stroller, everyone is able to get around with ease and comfort.”

The boardwalks are also environmentally friendly. “They are made with metal ground screws that drill into the ground during the winter, so no concrete, which reduces our carbon footprint,” says DeJong. “There are fiberglass frames underneath the boardwalk, which will last for more than our lifetimes.” In addition to making the park easier to access, “the habitat around us is now better protected for the native species, which helps us live up to our commitment to native wildlife,” says DeJong, proving that accessibility and sustainability can go together to create long-lasting parks where everyone is included. **FW**

Nickelodeon Universe Theme Park and DreamWorks Water Park, both at the American Dream mall, are innovative in their approach to sustainability.



Jaclyn Greenberg is a freelance writer based on the East Coast. She writes about disability, accessibility, travel, and personal finance. In her free time, she loves traveling with her family of five. Connect with her on **LinkedIn**:





European Attractions Industry Booms

THE EUROPEAN ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRY CONTINUES TO THRIVE, as highlighted in the 2024 Europe Economic Impact Study, which analyzes 2023 year-end data. With more than 48,500 attractions across 16 countries, the sector welcomed nearly 1.8 billion visitors, reinforcing its vital role in the region's economy. Museums and science centers accounted for the largest share, representing 51% of all attractions. The industry supported approximately 868,000 jobs, while generating €16.2 billion in tax

and €32.7 billion in total labor income. Attractions across Europe had a total revenue impact of €126.6 billion, with €48.5 billion stemming from direct revenue. France, Germany, and the United Kingdom led the region in revenue generation, employment, and tax contributions, further cementing their significance in the market.

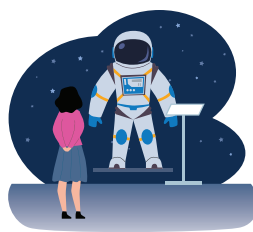
Below are the key findings from the 2024 report, reflecting 2023 year-end data ^{FW}

48,543

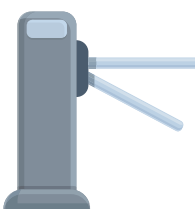
attractions
across 16
European
countries

**51%**

museums
and
science
centers
represented
the largest
share of
attractions

**#1**
France**#2**
Germany**#3**
United
Kingdom

Largest
contributions
to the region
in terms of
total revenue,
employment, and
tax generation

€16.2 B
generated in taxes**1.8 B**
visitors**€126.6 B**

Total revenue impact
including €48.5 B in
direct revenue

867,900
industry
supported jobs**€32.7 B**
in total labor
income

Read the full 2024
Europe Economic
Impact Study at **IAAPA.
org/ResearchFinder** or
scan the QR code.



Kelly Repass serves as IAAPA's vice president of global research. Her interest areas include strategic assessment, primary and secondary research, data analytics, and actionable insights to drive business performance and growth. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).



Elaine Mathis, Ph.D. is IAAPA's senior research analyst, where she helps IAAPA members leverage research to improve their businesses and explore consumer personalization through co-creation and the experience economy. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#).





Creating a VIP Guide: Elevating Attractions with AI Chat

Through an IAAPA partnership with Satisfi Labs, head of tourism Dan Flores shares how artificial intelligence (AI) can help guests navigate a visit in a more rewarding manner through instant access to information on their smart device.

THE ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRY IS KNOWN FOR creating magical moments and unforgettable experiences. Now, with the integration of AI conversational technology, attractions can drive new ways to enhance these experiences, while maintaining the human touch that keeps them unique. This digital evolution isn't just about automation—it's about creating more meaningful, personalized interactions that make every guest feel valued.

Imagine having a knowledgeable friend who knows everything about the attraction, is always available, and can communicate in any language. That's what AI conversation brings to the table. Whether providing instant answers about operating details, helping with dining recommendations, or offering real-time updates about show schedules, this technology is an always-on digital companion that enhances, rather than replaces human interaction.

The beauty of AI conversation lies in its ability to learn and adapt to each guest's preferences and needs. For families with young children, AI might prioritize information about kid-friendly attractions and stroller rental services. For thrill-seekers, it could focus on roller coaster wait times or rider height requirements. This personalization helps guests feel understood and cared for, even in a crowded park environment.

One of the most significant improvements comes in the form of real-time assistance. Guests no longer need to find an information board on a midway or wait in line at the guest relations window. They can instantly access wait times, show schedules, and even order food and



beverages through their mobile devices. This convenience allows visitors to spend more time enjoying attractions, shopping in retail stores, and grabbing a beverage, rather than spending time managing the logistics of a visit. The technology also reduces common friction points that detract from the park experience. Long queues for food ordering, confusion about loose article policies, or uncertainty about accessibility options can all be addressed instantly through conversational AI. The system can provide step-by-step directions, suggest less crowded dining times, and explain accessibility features in detail, thus ensuring guests with a smart device can confidently navigate the park.

Beyond just providing information, think of how AI conversation can enhance the storytelling aspect of a theme park. It can share interesting facts and trivia, provide background stories about rides at theme parks or animals at zoos, and even engage in playful, themed interactions that extend the park's narrative. This adds an extra layer of immersion to the experience, making visits more engaging and truly putting park managers in the driver's seat to making those experiences happen.

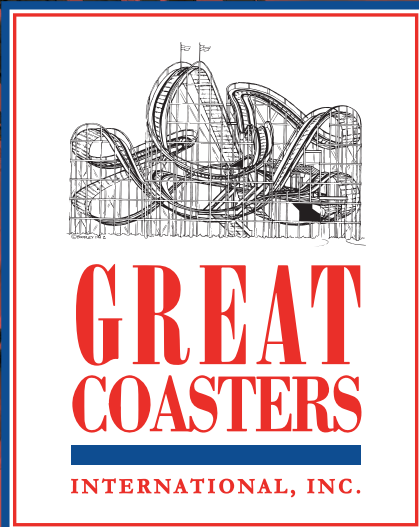
Perhaps most importantly, this technology helps parks maintain consistent service quality even during peak periods. While human staff members may become overwhelmed during busy times, AI conversation maintains responsiveness and accuracy, ensuring every guest receives prompt, helpful assistance regardless of crowd levels.

Integrating AI conversation even more into the attractions space represents a shift toward more intuitive, guest-centric experiences. By removing common obstacles and providing personalized support, attractions can help guests focus on what matters most—creating lasting memories with friends and family. This technology doesn't replace the warmth of human interaction but amplifies it by efficiently handling routine queries, allowing staff to focus on providing more meaningful, high-touch guest experiences. **FW**



Dan Flores is head of tourism at Satisfi Labs, an artificial intelligence partner of IAAPA. This column is printed in partnership with Satisfi Labs to empower attractions to discover new techniques to grow their business. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#).





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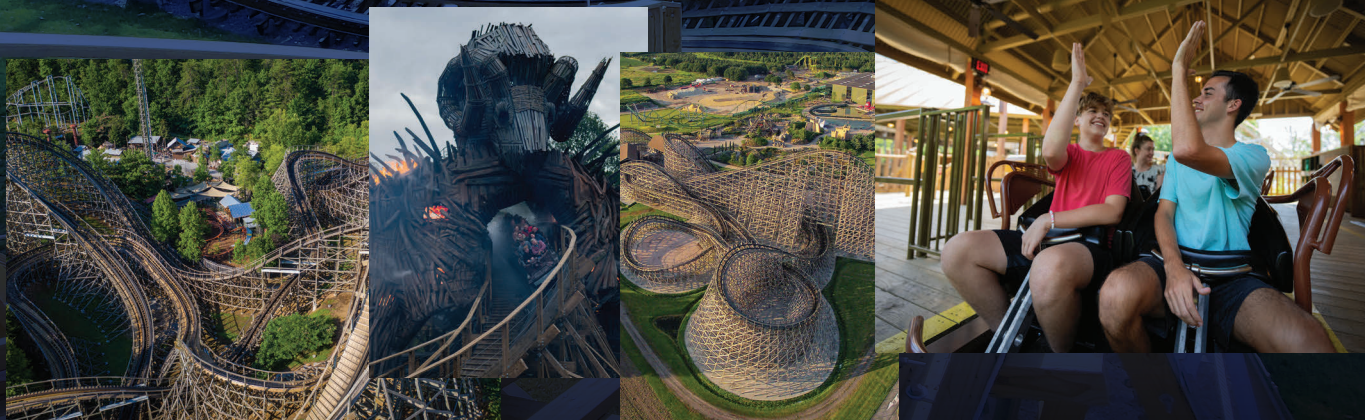
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Explore More at IAAPA Expo Asia 2025



EXPERIENCE THE PINNACLE OF INNOVATION AND NETWORKING in the attractions industry at IAAPA Expo Asia 2025, taking place in the dynamic city of Shanghai. From June 30 to July 3, the Shanghai New International Expo Center (SNIEC) will host industry professionals from around the globe for an immersive event featuring cutting-edge exhibitors, valuable

EDUSessions, and abundant business opportunities. The trade show floor will be open from July 1 to 3, showcasing a diverse array of exhibitors, products, and technologies that are set to shape the future of attractions.

“IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 marks our return to Shanghai after six years, reuniting the global attractions community under the inspiring theme

‘Find Possible.’ This year’s event will showcase over 300 exhibitors from more than 30 countries, delivering cutting-edge innovations spanning AI-driven (artificial intelligence) entertainment, advanced VR (virtual reality), and immersive ride experiences,” says Executive Director and Vice President of IAAPA Asia-Pacific Jack Chan.

Education Insights

One of the key highlights of IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 is its robust lineup of EDUSessions designed to equip industry professionals with the knowledge and tools needed to thrive in an evolving business landscape. Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in specialized training through the IAAPA Institute for Attractions Professionals and the IAAPA Safety Institute, gaining valuable insights from experts in the field.

Engaging EDUSessions will cover a wide range of topics, from the integration of AI and sustainability in attractions to guest experience enhancements and operational best practices. Learn from industry thought leaders about the latest trends in immersive entertainment, accessibility, and strategic marketing to drive business success. Interactive workshops will explore AI applications, global IP (intellectual property) trends, and emerging technologies shaping the industry’s future.



An IAAPA Expo Asia attendee tries out an exhibitor’s game product on the show floor.

Engaging Experiences

Beyond the classroom, IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 offers exclusive field experiences, providing attendees with behind-the-scenes access to some of Shanghai's most renowned attractions. These EDUTours offer firsthand insights into world-class facilities, innovative technologies, and operational strategies that set industry benchmarks. This year, attendees will have the rare opportunity to participate in behind-the-scenes tours of Legoland Resort Shanghai and Shanghai Disney Resort, exploring guest experience strategies and safety excellence at leading attractions.

Networking opportunities will be extensive, allowing professionals to exchange ideas and forge valuable partnerships in immersive settings. Attendees can also gain inspiration from Jill Estorino, president and managing director of Disney Parks International, who will speak at the Leadership Breakfast—offering unique perspectives on global industry trends and innovation.



Jill Estorino

Hosted Buyer Program

IAAPA Expo Asia will feature IAAPA's Hosted Buyer Program, designed to enhance the experience for qualified decision-makers. This curated initiative connects buyers with exhibitors in a structured environment, ensuring productive meetings and maximizing time spent at the Expo. IAAPA will cover travel




and accommodation expenses in exchange for scheduling meetings with exhibitors eager to connect with buyers. Additionally, enjoy exclusive networking events, targeted business opportunities, and a streamlined experience to make the most of IAAPA Expo Asia.

VIP Program

For an elevated experience, attendees can opt for the VIP Program, which offers premium benefits such as expedited registration, access to an exclusive VIP lounge, and a special briefing with IAAPA executives. This elite offering

ensures a seamless and enriching experience, allowing professionals to focus on maximizing their time at the Expo.

IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 provides a trifecta of value—global knowledge via expert-led workshops, innovation exposure through cutting-edge exhibitors, and practical insights from behind-the-scenes tours. Whether attendees seek to enhance operational efficiency, drive visitor engagement, or shape the future of attractions, IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 is the gateway to transforming possibilities into reality. 



Register for IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 today at [IAAPA.org/Expos](https://iaapa.org/Expos)



Thank you, 2025 Official Sponsors!

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Bowling Green State University Students Benefit from IAAPA Foundation Scholarships

THE IAAPA FOUNDATION CONTINUES TO MAKE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT on the future of the attractions industry by supporting students through scholarships and experiential learning opportunities. Two recipients of the IAAPA Foundation's scholarships, Madison Saurer and Bradley Eichelberger, are students in Bowling Green State University's Six Flags Resort and Attraction Management (RAAM) program. With financial assistance from the Foundation, they attended IAAPA Expo 2024 in Orlando, gaining invaluable industry exposure and networking opportunities.

Preparing for Careers in Attractions

Saurer, a junior at Bowling Green State University, studies Resort and Attraction Management. While still in the process of exploring career paths, she is "interested in human resources and event planning in theme parks." Saurer first learned about the IAAPA Foundation's scholarship opportunities through her program director, Swathi Ravichandran, during her sophomore year. Recognizing the potential benefits of attending the IAAPA Expo, Saurer applied for and received funding to support her participation.


Eichelberger, also a student in the RAAM program, is working toward a Bachelor of Science degree in partnership with Bowling Green State University and Six Flags Entertainment Corporation. His aspirations include becoming a supervisor in park operations, with a long-term goal of advancing to a director of park operations position. He learned about the IAAPA Foundation scholarships while registering for his first IAAPA Expo in 2023, after hearing from professors and past student attendees about the program's benefits. "After attending an IAAPA informational session through BGSU's RAAM program, I knew that a Foundation scholarship would be an amazing opportunity to not only offset the cost of attending the annual IAAPA Expo but also engage with the Foundation and its contributors," shares Eichelberger.

Experiential Learning at IAAPA Expo 2024

Both students highlighted how IAAPA Expo provided them with experiences that will shape their future careers. For Saurer, one of the most exciting opportunities was participating in a behind-the-scenes tour of Universal Orlando's Halloween Horror Nights. "As both a Universal fan and a student who is interested in working with the creative team that plans the Halloween Horror Nights event, I was excited to learn that I had the opportunity to speak to the current team members," she says. The experience offered her insights into the various departments involved in bringing the annual Halloween event to life. She credits her professors' industry connections and the IAAPA Foundation's support for making this opportunity possible.

Eichelberger's experience at IAAPA Expo was equally transformative. Through his attendance, he was able to network with industry professionals and build meaningful relationships that will aid in his career development. A highlight of his trip was meeting Jeffrey Siebert, president of Six Flags Fiesta Texas. "I had been following Mr. Siebert's career since his tenure with Kings Island, and to be able to meet him was truly an honor," shares Eichelberger.

Shaping Tomorrow's Industry Leaders

The IAAPA Foundation plays a crucial role in fostering the next generation of attractions industry leaders. By providing scholarships and funding for students to attend the IAAPA Expo, the foundation enables emerging professionals like Saurer and Eichelberger to gain real-world exposure, network with industry veterans, and refine their career goals. Their experiences at IAAPA Expo 2024 underscore the importance of such initiatives in ensuring a bright future for the global attractions industry. 



"A career in the attractions industry allows me to work in an environment where I can use creativity to create and blend different departments, like entertainment and guest service, to create new worlds that guests can explore. A job in this industry also allows me to see the positive impact on families and how they create long-lasting memories at attractions."

—Madison Saurer



"A professional career in the attractions industry would mean creating lifelong memories for others. Millions of visitors from around the world visit attractions on an annual basis, and knowing that I helped play a small role in bringing these experiences to the masses is the most rewarding experience."

—Bradley Eichelberger

As a U.S. 501(C)(3) tax-exempt charity, the IAAPA Foundation is separate from IAAPA, a 501(C)(6) trade association. Learn more about the important work the IAAPA Foundation at IAAPA.org/Foundation

IAAPA APAC Sustainability Summit Shines

AT IAAPA'S FIRST APAC SUSTAINABILITY SUMMIT, hosted from March 13 to 14, key members of the attractions industry visited Singapore to glean insights on best practices in sustainability. The event brought together nearly 100 industry professionals for a dynamic exchange of ideas. With eight sessions, two guided tours, and insightful discussions, the event fostered the idea that sustainability is a long-term process that requires commitment and collaboration.

"The discussions reinforced that sustainability is a journey, not a destination," says IAAPA Global Sustainability Director Ylva Linder. "No effort is too small. Many businesses are already making positive changes such as reducing plastic use, sourcing food responsibly, and embedding sustainability into guest experiences. If every attraction takes a step forward, together we can create a lasting, positive impact."

Jack Chan, vice president and executive director of IAAPA Asia-Pacific, also highlighted the positive reception from attendees. "Many attendees were very happy IAAPA is leading the way in this important cause and asked that we continue to champion this topic. We will do our best to stay at the forefront of this important journey."



IAAPA Global Sustainability Director Ylva Linder's Six Actionable Suggestions for Attractions



Pursue a Sustainability Certification

Certifications can establish effective sustainability practices, support continuous improvement, minimize risks, and create a greater positive impact. For example, the upcoming Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Standard can help keep an attraction's sustainability goals aligned and accountable. The GSTC establishes and manages global standards for sustainable travel and tourism, known as the GSTC Criteria. There are four sets of standards: destination criteria for public policymakers and destination managers; industry criteria for hotels and tour operators; MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions) criteria for venues, event organizers, and events and exhibitions; and attraction criteria for theme parks, museums, national parks, and beyond.



Integrate Nature Into Attractions

Work with nature rather than against it. For example, use natural light and ventilation, or collect rainwater (as done by Mandai Wildlife Group in Singapore). Implement energy-saving projects with quick returns on investment, like cold water pipes for cooling or solar panels (as seen at Gardens by the Bay in Singapore). Make use of unused spaces to grow biodiverse plants, which can also attract guests and improve ROI. Offer sustainability tours to educate visitors—or even involve them in your initiatives.



Support Local and Sustainable Suppliers

Owa Coffee served at the Singapore Zoo is deemed "wildlife-friendly," meaning it is grown in a manner that helps conserve primate habitats and provides income for local farmers in Indonesia.



Donate Surplus Food to Charities

At the end of the operating day, leftover food can be shared with local organizations that will distribute items to the food insecure. Attractions should always maintain safe food handling and quality initiatives (as practiced by Marina Bay Sands).



Improve Accessibility

Welcoming guests of all abilities has social sustainability and business-related benefits. On average, 15% of the global population lives with a disability.



Start the Decarbonization Journey

Attractions can lessen their carbon footprint by identifying major emission sources, engaging stakeholders, and shifting mindsets toward decarbonization as an opportunity for innovation and improvement.



IAAPA Honors 2025 Winners

Funworld congratulates the innovators and visionaries behind this year's award-winning projects.

Food & Beverage Excellence

Best F&B Building Renovation or New Facility Build

Meow Wolf Houston, Radio Tave's Cowboy Hevvven

Best New F&B Special Event or Festival

Vancouver Aquarium, Fish & Sips at Vancouver Aquarium

Best New Menu Item Limited

Ananda Farm, The Perfect Pair: Wine and Charcuterie Topper

Best New Menu Item Year-Round

Vancouver Aquarium, The Megalodon Burger

Games & Merchandise Excellence

Best Collective Visual Merchandise Display: Limited Operation

Fantasy Island Amusement Park, Fantasy Island's Midway

Best Collective Visual Merchandise Display: Year-Round Operation

Africam Safari, Morocco Gift Shop

Best Individual Visual Merchandise Display

Morey's Piers and Water Parks, Candy Wheel

Best Custom Retail Souvenir: Limited Operation

Morey's Piers and Water Parks, Curley's Fries Dog Toys

Best Custom Retail Souvenir: Year-Round Operation

Africam Safari, Sketch Hoodies

Best Customized Game Prize

Morey's Piers and Water Parks, Uncle Sammy

Human Resources Excellence

Best Talent Acquisition Program

Ocean Park Corporation, Ocean Park Halloween Fest 2024 - Go Go Let's Ghost!

Best Innovation in Training

Europa-Park Resort, Welcome Center 75 & MACK Academy

Best Health and Wellness Program

Europa-Park Resort, Feelgood Healthcare Center

Best Reward, Recognition, and Retention Program

Fundación Parque Jaime Duque, FPJD Work - Family - Life Balance

Live Entertainment Excellence

Most Creative Halloween Production

Universal Studios Hollywood, The Purge: Dangerous Waters

Most Creative Winter Holiday Production

Walt Disney World, "What's This?" Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas Sing-Along

Most Creative Atmosphere Production

Universal Beijing Resort, Universal's Half Time Show

Most Creative Theatrical Production: Limited Operation

Bauer Lab, Buchanan: The Original Korean Musical

Most Creative Theatrical Production: Year-Round Operation

Puy du Fou Asia, SAGA City of Light

Most Creative Spectacular

Europa-Park Resort, Colossal "20 Jahre Colosseo"

Marketing Excellence

Best Outdoor Advertisement

Aqua Nick Water Park, Best Day In Riviera Maya

Best Digital Marketing Campaign

Fantasilandia, Poseídos por la Diversión Total / Possessed by the Total Fun

Best Social Media Marketing Campaign

Great Canadian Bungee, The Branded Customer Experience Campaign

Best Integrated Marketing Campaign

Ocean Park Corporation, Horrors of the Hidden City

Sustainability Excellence

Best Sustainability Program

PortAventura World, Creating Unforgettable Experiences with Positive Impact

Top FEC of the Year

Zap Zone XL

Top LBE of the Year

Meow Wolf Grapevine

The Showstopper

Carnival Magic, River Carnival Parade

Individual Achievement

Young Professionals

Steven Shen	Cassidy Newman
Marco Michan	Jessi O'Daniel

Service Awards

Shaun McKeough	Evelyne Villame
Valeria Cañón	Gina Claassen

Inspiration Awards

Mario Mamon	Sabine Lehmann
Cicero Fiedler	Duncan Dickson

Thank you, IAAPA Honors Sponsors!

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IAAPA and TEA Shine Together at Thea Awards

ON MARCH 15, THE GLOBAL ATTRACTIONS INDUSTRY GATHERED to celebrate creativity and excellence at the annual Thea Awards Gala. Presented by the Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), this event recognizes groundbreaking projects and provides a platform for idea exchange, collaboration, and professional growth—goals that resonate strongly with IAAPA's own mission.

During the gala, IAAPA 2025 chairman Massimiliano Freddi, took the stage to present one of the evening's honors.

"Collectively, we bring together the sharpest minds and most-talented hands in our industry," says Freddi. "It's in this same space that we inspire each other to grow, innovate, and stretch."


"TEA and IAAPA both have so much to offer our respective members," says Chairperson of 7thSense and International Board President of TEA Matt Barton. "By working together when opportunities for collaboration arise, we provide the best value to our members and benefit the industry as a whole."

TEA Inspire, an event which precedes the awards gala, invites Thea recipients to share insights into their creative and technical journeys, enriching the broader industry dialogue.

Both associations understand that lasting innovation happens not in isolation, but through dialogue and shared experience. By co-hosting mixers, offering reciprocal benefits, and promoting events in underserved regions, IAAPA and TEA are expanding access to professional development opportunities across the globe.



"Our priorities can be summed up in four words: Connect, Grow, Inspire, Celebrate," Barton notes. "It's critical that TEA continue to grow with the industry and embrace new areas. We are committed to promoting the themed entertainment industry to the next generation of storytellers."

The 2025 Thea Awards Gala marked another year of recognizing excellence—but it also demonstrated the power of connection. As both IAAPA and TEA continue to support industry professionals worldwide, their shared commitment to elevating creativity and collaboration remains a vital part of the global attractions ecosystem. 



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The Power of IAAPA Membership

As the global leader in the attractions industry, IAAPA offers unbeatable membership benefits tailored to professionals, companies, and organizations.

2025 Membership Options

IAAPA caters to the varied needs of industry stakeholders and offers three membership categories:

- **Attractions Facilities:** Designed for amusement parks, water parks, entertainment centers, museums, zoos, natural attractions, resorts, and more, this membership provides comprehensive coverage for entire facilities, irrespective of size.
- **Manufacturer/Supplier/Consultant:** Tailored for companies engaged in manufacturing, supplying, or consulting within the attractions sector, this membership extends across the entire organizational spectrum.
- **Individual/Student:** Crafted for professionals operating within the attractions industry, this membership offers tailored categories catering to diverse career stages, including young professionals, retirees, educators, and students.

Member Benefits

IAAPA membership affords unparalleled advantages aimed at driving strategic growth and fostering professional development.

News and Publications

- **Funworld Magazine:** Gain access to the industry's preeminent source of information, covering trends, innovations, and best practices, delivered in print and digital formats.
- **IAAPA News Daily:** Produced by Funworld's editorial team, this daily e-newsletter delivers headlines and insights from accredited news sources across the globe.
- **IAAPA.org Access:** Seamlessly navigate industry news, event information, educational resources, and regional updates via IAAPA.org, the association's centralized online platform.

Connections

- **Expos and Events:** Experience premier networking, innovation, and knowledge-sharing opportunities at IAAPA's flagship events, where members enjoy exclusive perks and savings on registration fees, exhibit spaces, and event tickets.
- **IAAPA Regional Events:** Network with industry peers and stakeholders at discounted rates through a comprehensive calendar of regional networking events.
- **IAAPA Connect+:** Enhance your event experience with an interactive platform providing easy access to schedules, exhibitor information, wayfinding tools, and the chance to connect with fellow attendees.
- **IAAPA Connect+ Marketplace:** Access a virtual hub for year-round networking and business opportunities, connecting buyers and sellers across the globe.
- **IAAPA Job Board:** Source top talent and explore career opportunities within the global attractions industry through IAAPA's dedicated job board.

Research and Resources

- **Reports and Industry Data:** Tap into the premier source of global attractions research. Explore operational benchmark reports, regional economic impact studies, quarterly outlook reports, and an annual global theme and amusement park outlook study.
- **Crisis Communications Support:** Ensure your organization is ready for a crisis. Download IAAPA's Crisis Communications Template from the IAAPA Bookstore. In a crisis, call the 24/7 support line: +1 321-319-7602.
- **Business Solutions Partnership Program:** Provides the resources and support to create new and proven revenue streams, reduce costs, and optimize operational efficiencies.
- **Hosted Buyer Program:** Meet with a wide range of IAAPA Expo exhibitors to learn about new products and trends, network with leaders, and stay up to date with the latest industry developments.

Education

- **Certification Programs:** Elevate professional credentials with esteemed certification programs, including the IAAPA Certified Attractions Professional (ICAP) and IAAPA Certified Attractions Executive (ICAE) designations.
- **Webinars, Webcasts, and Online Learning:** Engage in monthly live webinars, archived sessions, and online learning resources covering industry-specific topics, which are available in multiple languages.

Safety Standards and Training

- **Facility Excellence Self-Assessment:** Leverage IAAPA's safety tool to measure progress and assess the health of safety procedures.
- **Safety Guidance:** Prioritize safety and compliance with IAAPA's global efforts to establish industry-leading safety standards and comprehensive training initiatives.

Public Affairs

- **Industry Advocacy:** Benefit from IAAPA's advocacy efforts aimed at shaping industry regulations and legislation to ensure a conducive business environment for attractions professionals worldwide.

IAAPA membership serves as a catalyst for professional growth and industry advancement, offering a wealth of benefits tailored to meet the diverse needs of attractions professionals worldwide. Join IAAPA today and unlock the full spectrum of advantages poised to elevate success within the global attractions industry. Visit IAAPA.org to learn more.

Visit www.IAAPA.org to explore the full breadth of the association's offerings. 

ASSOCIATION NEWS AND BENEFITS | CALENDAR

This is a partial listing of upcoming IAAPA events. Event details are as of April 8, 2025, and subject to change. For the most up-to-date information, visit [IAAPA.org/Events](https://iaapa.org/Events)

MAY 2025

IAAPA Alps Adventure Post-Tour

1-3 | Switzerland and Italy

IAAPA Meetup: Navy Pier

6 | Chicago

IAAPA Meetup: Walibi Holland

22 | Netherlands

JUNE 2025



SXSW London

2-5 | London

IAAPA and AAVEA Africa Summit

11-13 | Cape Town, South Africa

IAAPA Meetup: Wiener Prater

26 | Vienna



30-July 3 | Shanghai, China

JULY 2025



Wonders of China after Expo

4-7 | Shanghai; Xi'an

SEPTEMBER 2025

IAAPA Public Affairs Conference 2025

15-17 | Washington, D.C.



22-26 | Barcelona, Spain

NOVEMBER 2025



18-21 | Orlando

CONGRATULATIONS!

On behalf of Falcon's Attractions, we congratulate
Universal Orlando Resort and Universal Creative
on the opening of Epic Universe.

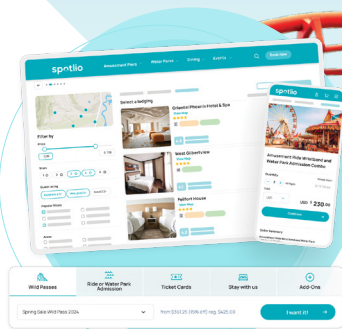
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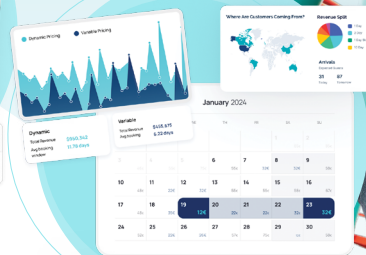
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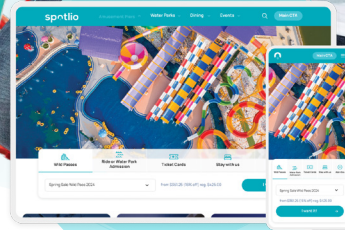
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The Heroine of Heartware

Jill Estorino, the president and managing director of Disney Parks International shares insight, thought leadership, and advice for busy attractions professionals

by Scott Fais

THE SUN NEVER SETS on Jill Estorino's vision—or responsibilities.

As the president and managing director of Disney Parks International, the charismatic leader guides the teams at Disney's theme parks in Tokyo, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Paris. Between these four properties and her base of operation in Burbank, California—on the same historic studio lot where the Disney company made their headquarters in 1940—is a swath of 17 time zones.

"I bring a globally minded perspective to the table," Estorino says. "It helps me, on a daily basis, to really maneuver from Paris in the morning, to the three Asia sites in the afternoon, understanding the consumer, understanding the media landscape, understanding how we operate a bit differently in Tokyo versus Paris."

It's a broad territory of four resorts that include six gated theme parks and 18 hotels and lodging properties.

"I always say that every touchpoint is a brand touchpoint. From the guide map, to how we position ourselves in the marketplace, to the opening of World of Frozen at Hong Kong Disneyland, every action is a reflection of our brand," she says.

Since the start of the decade, Disney Experiences—the arm of the company responsible for designing and operating theme parks, resorts, and cruise ships; crafting personal vacation experiences; and creating consumer products—has embarked on an ambitious global expansion of its international theme park properties.

The opening of Zootopia at Shanghai Disneyland in late 2023, which features a signature trackless dark ride, is one of Estorino's favorite projects to date. The story is as fun as the attraction is thrilling, where each scene keeps riders guessing what's next through unexpected turns, spins, slides, and drops, with appearances from Audio-Animatronics characters like Judy Hopps, Nick Wilde, Clawhauser, and others along the journey.

Looking ahead to 2026, a 2-billion-euro investment at Disneyland Paris' second gate will lead to a reimagining of more than 90% of the park's original offerings and roughly double its footprint since its 2002 debut.

How does Estorino serve as a conductor keeping parks across a wide geographical span and their teams from diverse cultures in concert? She focuses on something Estorino calls "heartware."

"Our cast members are one of the most valuable parts of our company. I refer to them as heartware," she explains. "You have the hardware of the physical park—the rides and the attractions and the shows. But, then there's the heartware: the cast. At the end of the day, that's where the human interaction happens."



JILL
HOUSTON, TX
Disney Parks International

Estorino, a seasoned 34-year veteran of the attractions industry, sat down with Funworld for a conversation on growth, leadership, and the importance of self-care for busy attractions leaders.

Orchestrating Strategic Growth

The wide expansion taking place across Disney's parks in Asia and Europe began with research. Estorino says the first step when planning for growth is understanding what the consumer wants—and how that varies by market. In China, for example, Shanghai Disneyland sees high attendance from young adults.

"The young adult female has taken hold of this brand and of this park, and they're creating a sophisticated energy inside the park," Estorino shares. "They bring their fashion sensibility, their modern perspectives, and their technology capability. The park has become not only a backdrop for their WeChat, but they're also creating a vibe in the park."

There are several places for capturing picture-perfect moments in Zootopia at Shanghai Disneyland, a fitting appeal to this guest base.

"The land is rich and dynamic, which means all of the show elements have to be integrated seamlessly," says Chang Xu, a Walt

Disney Imagineering senior producer on the Zootopia project. "The team really had to come together with the same creative vision, helping and trusting each other, to bring the land to life."

For example, one of those dynamic areas includes Ottertown's Flower Shop, which Disney Imagineers recreated as a facade in the new land—complete with plants and props—to make the store appear believable in guests' all-important selfies for social media. Yet, the attention to detail in Zootopia doesn't stop with a feast for the eye; it also engages the taste buds.

"We worked closely with our food and beverage partners from Shanghai Disney Resort, who understand the market—and the film—to design the dining experience," says Xu. Imagineers elected to recreate the iconic Jumbeaux's Cafe from the film, which exemplifies the variety of scale found in Zootopia with its huge door that's designed for elephants. Yet, Xu says to make the facility operationally friendly, the design team turned the giant door into a walk-up window for food orders. A creative menu featuring delectable donuts and flavorful popsicles of all sizes, among other treats, are designed to look perfect on camera.

Estorino tells Funworld that the second step when planning an expansion is looking at operational and financial goals.

"We may have operational needs we want to address, such as improving navigation or spreading demand across the resort. There may be financial goals or new commercial ideas we're trying to drive. So, it's a combination between what the consumer wants and desires as well as what the operation and business needs," she says.

Estorino's office is steps away from the famed Walt Disney Animation Studios, where animated classics such as "Cinderella," "Peter Pan," and "Sleeping Beauty" were hand-painted. It's from this deep well of beloved stories and recent titles that provide the ideas for the latest expansions, including "Frozen" and "Zootopia."

"We do our due diligence on the front end and really understand which stories are going to resonate, and sometimes, we do miss the mark. I would say that's rare, but we are quick to change when our guests and our operations are feeling that we either need to evolve the story that we introduced or bring in a new story. We're not afraid to do that," she says.

BELOW: Ottertown's Flower Shop inside Zootopia at Shanghai Disneyland is a colorful spot featuring plants and flowers. The location is a favorite of those who post photos on social media.



Listening to Employees

"Our cast are a great barometer for identifying issues and opportunities we need to address, and they often have solutions in mind as well."



Leading with Gracious Conviction

In an industry where creativity, operations, sales, budgeting, and human contact all intersect, Estorino says leaders of attractions owe it to themselves to develop a cadence and a commitment to provide regular feedback.

"I think one of the greatest gifts we can give the people who work with us, and around us, is timely feedback. I think in many organizations, we have reservations about providing feedback, and we may not have the skill and the language to do it," she says.

Estorino believes waiting six months for sharing opinions after a project is complete is not beneficial.

"I've thought a lot about that over the years, and I can say that's part of my leadership style. I have found that voice to provide feedback—and timely feedback," she says.



Finding Confidence Promptly

"Find your seat at that table early in your career. You know you're entering the room—take that figurative chair. It's just that vote of confidence in yourself."



Be Inspired by Jill Estorino at IAAPA Expo Asia 2025

Start your day with enlightenment from the president and managing director of Disney Parks International as Jill Estorino explores the art of building brand affinity and shares valuable lessons and perspectives during the Leadership Breakfast at IAAPA Expo Asia on July 2. Learn more and register today at IAAPA.org/LeadershipBreakfast

New and Next: Disney Parks' Continued International Growth *by Scott Fais*

Each one of the resorts that Jill Estorino, president and managing director of Disney Parks International, champions is poised for continued investment. Here's a look at the expansion on the horizon, from Asia to Europe.

Tokyo Disney Resort

Tokyo DisneySea will debut Dreams Take Flight on July 16. Through March 19, 2026, Tokyo DisneySea Park will celebrate "Duffy and Friends 20th: Colorful Happiness" with new entertainment, special menus, and decor to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Duffy's debut at the park. Guests at Tokyo Disneyland can look forward to a major renovation of Tomorrowland coming in 2027, including the newly rebuilt Space Mountain.

Hong Kong Disneyland Resort

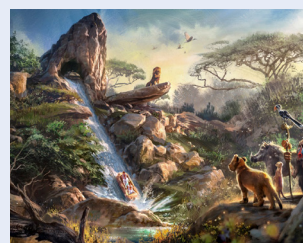
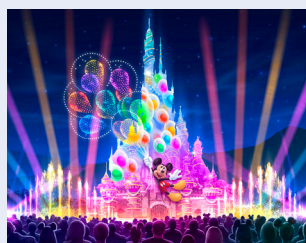
Hong Kong Disneyland's 20th anniversary celebrations kick off on June 28 with a limited-time concert-style stage show and a brand-new daytime parade, "Friendtastic!" At night, an anniversary edition of "Momentous: Party in the Night Sky!" will feature projections extending down Main Street, U.S.A. and drone technology in the skies above. Current expansion plans also include a new Pixar entertainment offering and Marvel-themed experiences..

Shanghai Disney Resort

Shanghai Disneyland is focused on two expansions. Leveraging the popularity of the Marvel universe, a high-energy Spider-Man thrill coaster will mark the debut of the Shanghai park's first major Marvel attraction. Meanwhile, a new nine-story, 400-room deluxe hotel, inspired by early 20th-century Shanghai architecture, will offer park views from the shores of Wishing Star Lake.

Disneyland Paris

Walt Disney Studios Park, the second gate in France, will be rebranded Disney Adventure World when World of Frozen debuts in 2026 along the shores of a newly created lake that will also serve as a canvas for a new nighttime spectacular. In addition, construction begins in fall 2025 on a new area themed to Walt Disney Animation Studios' film "The Lion King," home to Pride Rock and a new water-based attraction.





Choosing Optimism

"Optimistic leaders are the visionary leaders. I think that then translates to how they carry themselves at work, how they run meetings, how they make decisions."

The warm conversationalist describes her leadership style at Disney Experiences as a "pacesetter," the leader who sets the bar high for excellence and delivers every day.

How does she gauge success? It, in part, goes back to connecting with the heartware.

"I would say our guests and our cast tell us in surveys whether we're successful or not," she says. "It's beyond business, creativity, and innovation; rather, how our guests and our cast are responding to what we're doing."

Estorino also defines success by going beyond a P&L (profit and loss) document.

"One thing that I think is unique about working for a company like Disney is that creativity and creative product are fundamental. That goes for the development of a show, or an attraction, or a big idea, or a theme for an anniversary, or that 30-second TV spot."

While she "loves the Excel spreadsheet," where data can "be confirming and validating," Estorino believes it's instinct and intuition that help drive decision making.

"I always think about my visceral response when I see something creative or innovative. Did it get me here?" she says, holding a hand over her heart. "Did I have that lump in my throat? Did I have that stir in my belly? Did it move me emotionally—even for just a second or two? That's instinct and intuition."

The Leader Who Gives Back

Sitting across from Estorino during a conversation on the state of the industry is like attending a masterclass. She holds eye contact and inserts your name into the conversation to affirm she is engaged with the dialogue.

She is particularly interested in assisting rising talent in their professional journeys. Mentoring is a space Estorino has leaned into, and in the past five years, she's crafted initiatives focused on developing women at Disney's international properties through formal and informal mentorship.

"What's really exciting is how cast members are given the opportunity to have a mentor in another country. So, they can pick someone in France to be their mentor even though they work in Hong Kong," Estorino explains. She is quick to encourage other industry veterans to inspire the younger talent within their own business.

"As a leader, you have the choice: to mentor, coach, and develop others...or not," she says of developing leaders in the attractions industry.

For example, Estorino recently began accepting requests for 15-minute career navigation conversations with any Disney cast member from across the organization.

"If anyone sends me a note wanting a 15-minute career conversation, I accept it.



Visit Shanghai Disneyland during Expo Asia 2025

From behind-the-scenes EDUTours to the Opening Reception, Shanghai Disney Resort will hold a vibrant tapestry of learning, connection, and networking opportunities. See the official agenda at IAAPA.org/IAAPAE expo AsiaAgenda

It's a recent phenomenon," she says with enthusiasm.

What advice would she tell her younger self?

"You find your voice professionally. Find it early, because your voice is where the ideas are, it's where your influence is," Estorino says. "The earlier you can find it in your career, the more it's going to shape your career."

The Importance of Self-Care

One of Estorino's most powerful words of advice for other attractions leaders: delegate.

"Do you have confidence in your management team? If you do, what's holding you back from empowering and delegating?" she asks.

While she is a committed leader, Estorino is also a devout, self-proclaimed "health and fitness fanatic." She vehemently protects her personal time to care for herself.

"I put a stake in the ground when I need it, especially when traveling. I carve out time to work out and eat healthy in every destination I go to," she shares.

One of Estorino's hacks is to exercise before an international flight and again



Scott Fais is the senior director of global editorial at IAAPA. The 12-time Associated Press-honored journalist enjoys visiting immersive attractions of all kinds—and meeting the professionals who design and operate these facilities. His favorite attraction? The one he'll visit next. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#):



upon landing.


She says the dedication to her physical well-being leads to increased energy and focus.

"I think about that methodically, and I build my professional day around that," Estorino shares.

Beyond physical fitness, she also encourages leaders to stay grounded and think positively.

"I think there are lots of tricks to maintaining your optimism for the future; you should think about it pragmatically," she advises. "You have to manage the content you're consuming ... and stay in touch with what's uplifting."

Parallel to a Disney Animation classic, this Funworld feature leaves an uplifting message.

"Believe in your people. They can do more than you ever thought," Estorino concludes, keeping the heartware at heart of the story. 



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EXPLORING WHAT'S
HOT IN THE WORLD OF
HALLOWEEN OFFERINGS

BY JULIANA GILLING

HOLIDAY PARK GERMANY



WHAT GOES "BOO" is shaping up to be a banner year for Halloween attractions in 2025. Continuous screams are coming to Las Vegas as Universal Horror Unleashed, the first year-round horror experience by Universal Destinations & Experiences (UDX), is projected to welcome brave souls beginning Aug. 14.

Guests will face their fears inside four haunted houses featuring original stories inspired by "The Texas Chainsaw Massacre," "The Exorcist," Universal Monsters, and "Scarecrow." The 100,000-square-foot facility will also include four nightmarish themed areas, with live entertainment and eerie bars and eateries. "We're thrilled to have our award-winning creative and entertainment teams working tirelessly to bring these terrors to life in 2025," says Page Thompson, president of New Ventures for UDX.

Left: A vampy clown at Six Flags México embraces his inner demons while swinging a disco ball on a leash during a Festival del Terror stage production.

Below: A pumpkin-faced scarecrow beckons guests to come closer in an outdoor scare zone found at Six Flags México.



IP TRICKS AND TREATS

The new Universal Horror Unleashed attraction embodies two key trends. First, many parks are extending their Halloween seasons. Could the popularity of seasonal scare attractions lead to more year-round options or more frequent haunted events beyond Halloween? Second, basing themed horror experiences on established intellectual properties (IP) remains a solid strategy.

South Korean theme park Everland partnered with Netflix to bring two shows—Korean zombie apocalypse drama “All of Us Are Dead” and “Stranger Things”—to the park’s outdoor Blood City horror-themed zone last fall.

Legacy Six Flags parks partnered with horror franchises in 2024 for Fright Fest. “Last year, we strengthened our alliance with

Warner Bros.,” says Humberto García, marketing, PR, and sales general manager at Six Flags México.

The Latin American park scored a success with an attraction inspired by The “Conjuring” film franchise. Six Flags México guests also had access to an exclusive maze based on “DCeased,” a comic book miniseries published by DC Comics in 2019. “We transformed The Justice League attraction into a giant maze,” García explains.

He suggests other operators listen and accept guest feedback, which is valuable to the park.

“Visitors are our best guides,” García believes. Although Six Flags México included more Warner Bros. properties last year, it built two fewer mazes than in 2023, prioritizing attention to detail over quantity. “Our visitors rated the 2024 Festival of Terror as the best in history,” García says. High-quality entertainment will be a priority as the park marks its 25th anniversary in 2025.

Six Flags México’s 2025 Festival del Terror starts on Sept. 12 and concludes on Nov. 9. The public appetite for frights has established it as the park’s most important season, García says. Extended seasons enable parks to optimize ticket sales while enriching the experience for returning guests. Exclusive and limited-time offerings also help drive demand.

Warner Bros. IPs are a big draw in Australia. Village Roadshow Theme Parks offers two Halloween events on select October nights at its Australian parks. Warner Bros. Movie World targets a mature audience with the scarier Fright Nights, while Sea World has the family-friendly Spooky Nights.

Beetlejuice hosted Fright Nights for the first time in 2024. Five purpose-built mazes were highlights of the event; Village Roadshow Theme Parks chief operating officer Bikash Randhawa considers them a top investment. Warner Bros. Movie World also launched four fresh horror encounters with fearsome characters, including Pennywise and Valak.

Randhawa reports “great” attendance for Sea World’s Spooky Nights Season, with shows such as Monster Mayhem enthralling audiences.



A “QUIETLY” SUCCESSFUL YEAR

Movie Park Germany had its most successful Halloween season ever in 2024, achieving a 9% increase in attendance compared to the previous year. “We are very proud of this new record,” says managing director Thorsten Backhaus.

IP-inspired mazes have driven attendance growth. Last year, park guests faced ferocious monsters in a silent fight for freedom in a horror house based on Paramount Pictures’ “A Quiet Place” movie franchise. Days after its announcement, the attraction sold out for the entire event.

Movie Park Germany and Paramount Studios’ teams collaborated closely to achieve maximum authenticity. The maze occupies a soundstage with a 15-meter-high ceiling, allowing for massive physical sets based on the movies. Animated creature content and original movie sound files heightened the tension. The finale included an “attack” by a three-meter-tall animatronic.

The 1,400-square-meter attraction could accommodate large groups of up to 20 guests making their way through the maze together. Uniquely, all guests in the maze had to be quiet. “It was a completely new approach and a sensational hit for our park,” says Manuel Prossotowicz, director of marketing and sales brand development at Movie Park Germany.

Story-driven mazes have a higher chance of success, he believes. Guests are also looking for more immersive and interactive experiences, and parks must



MOVIE PARK GERMANY

Rigging and pyrotechnics provide an immersive experience at Movie Park Germany.



stay up to date on evolving guest preferences. “If you miss a trend, you miss a huge opportunity to increase your attendance and revenue,” Prossotowicz shares.

“The maze is the perfect marketing hook to get guests into the park,” Prossotowicz says, but parks should consider the bigger picture. Movie Park Germany presents a full Halloween experience that combines mazes, scare zones, street atmosphere, live entertainment, decorations, and food and beverage offerings.

The opening ceremony features a monster parade with 280 scare actors. Taking a lead from top music festivals, Movie Park Germany’s Halloween Horror Festival features live DJs. The park also reimagines existing rides and attractions for the spooky season, switching out content on its media-based Studio Tour roller coaster, for example.

SWITCHING STRATEGIES

Holiday Park Germany’s Halloween Fright Nights adds new mazes and scare zones yearly. The 2024 season included more



MOVIE PARK GERMANY

LEFT: Toverland's evening event is for adults only.

BELOW: Meanwhile, Toverland found scary success with its daytime event for children.



horror attractions, more live entertainment, and more event days than ever before.

Traditionally, the park's regular ticket price included free access to all horror houses, but Fright Nights' popularity brought challenges. "In 2024, we implemented a major change," explains Jan Reinisch, Holiday Park Germany's marketing manager. The park stopped open access to the horror houses and implemented a time slot system to ensure shorter queues and a better guest experience. Smaller groups also allow for more interaction with scare actors, leading to a more enjoyable experience.

Visitors responded well to the new system, according to Reinisch. Holiday Park Germany is working on an interactive horror house for 2025 and plans to enhance the Halloween atmosphere with more scare zones, shows, and story-led experiences.

TAILORING TERROR

The rise of dual programming serves a more diverse demographic. In 2018, the Toverland theme park in the Netherlands introduced Halloween Days as a counterpart to its Halloween Nights offering. Halloween Days feature entertainment for children under 12, while Halloween Nights have a recommended minimum age of 12 years.

"This distinction allows us to offer a fitting autumn event for different target groups, making visiting the park more appealing

to a broader audience. In 2025, we will have 21 Halloween Days and 13 Halloween Nights," says Toverland's Entertainment Manager Luke Verhoeven.

The park has invested in several permanent haunted experiences, including The Witches Forest (2019), Maison de la Magie (2020), and Now You're Mine (2023).

"These walkthrough attractions exist year-round but are only used during Halloween. Since we don't need to set up and remove decor each season, we have been able to invest in high-quality sets, making the experiences even more immersive and believable for our guests," Verhoeven says.

Technological advancements will play a significant role in shaping future Halloween experiences, he believes. Now You're Mine creatively blends technology with storytelling. Guests step into a fictional mining museum. The mine's former owner vanished while searching for a stone reputed to grant eternal life. Deep in the tunnels, visitors discover they are not alone.

"What makes Now You're Mine truly innovative is our interactive helmet system, developed with attractions supplier Lagotronics Projects. Each guest wears a helmet equipped with a light that changes dynamically based on the scene. The helmets communicate in real-time with the walkthrough, triggering special effects throughout the experience. As the group's location is detected, the mine reacts accordingly. This creates a fully immersive experience, based on two-way communication between the helmets and the rooms," Verhoeven explains.

Now You're Mine also features stunning, large-scale sets across two floors, including a path between two waterfalls. "We developed every aspect of the attraction in-house. It's a unique addition to our Halloween Nights lineup."

Toverland develops stories and themes aligned with its magical worlds and



TOVERLAND

continuously improves existing offerings. In 2024, the park revamped its opening parade, introducing five new floats. The Witches Forest and Maison de la Magie also became wheelchair accessible. “This reflects our commitment to making Toverland as inclusive as possible for all our guests,” Verhoeven says.

CHILD'S PLAY


Plopsaland De Panne has also achieved success with a dual programming approach in recent years. In 2024, the Belgian park offered a kid-friendly, daytime Halloween experience, and a more intense, horror-filled experience for adults after sundown. “However, starting last year, we shifted our focus entirely to a kids’ Halloween to better align with our beloved Studio 100 characters and our core audience: families with younger children,” explains Joachim Duclot, who is responsible for entertainment.

“We saw a remarkable 66% increase in attendance last year. I think that is proof that this was the right decision for our park and our guests.”

Plopsaland De Panne expanded its entertainment lineup, focusing on character-driven experiences, including more meet-and-greets and special Halloween



shows. “One of the most exciting additions was Night Watch and the House of Pandora, a kid-friendly, immersive experience inspired by the popular ‘Night Watch’ television series,” Duclot says. The IP-based attraction made children active participants in the story.

Night Watch and the House of Pandora will return in 2025, along with an exclusive Night Watch theater show, written specifically for the park. “We’re investing in ‘Night Watch’ for this year’s Halloween because it aligns perfectly with the season and resonates deeply with our audience,” says Duclot. “I’m excited for this year’s Halloween celebration!” 

Children experience Plopsaland De Panne’s family-friendly, daytime Halloween event.



Juliana Gilling, Funworld’s contributing editor, began covering the global attractions industry in 1994. She reports on innovative people, projects, and additions for Funworld and the IAAPA News Hub. Juliana lives in the U.K. Connect with her on **LinkedIn**:



FROM SPECTATOR TO EXPLORER: *Rainforest Wild Asia*

The evolution of zoo experiences
in Singapore

by Michael Switow



ALFRED KUA

MANDAI WILDLIFE GROUP



SINGAPORE'S NEWEST WILDLIFE ATTRACTION, Rainforest Wild Asia, offers visitors an adventure-based zoo experience unlike any other in the region.

Located within the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, the 13-hectare park allows animals to roam in naturalistic environments while visitors navigate uneven terrain. Stepping over rocks, crossing man-made logs, and following marker ribbons on trees—to catch a glimpse of wildlife—is part of the experience. The effort is rewarding to see creatures such as the endangered Philippine spotted deer or babirusa that tend to hide amid the trees.

“This park changes the way we typically experience zoos,” says Mandai Wildlife Group Deputy CEO and Chief Life Sciences Officer Dr. Cheng Wen-Haur. “It’s about capturing the spirit of a rainforest adventure, inviting you to fully immerse yourself in nature’s rhythm and discover wildlife in the most unexpected places.”

Singapore is a leader in creating immersive, conservation-focused wildlife attractions that set global benchmarks in zoo design. As far back as the 1970s, the Singapore Zoo replaced older habitats with hidden barriers and moats, then in 1994, it launched the world’s first Night Safari.

Rainforest Wild Asia, Singapore’s fifth zoological attraction, builds on this tradition and elevates the experience to a new level, enabling visitors to explore different layers of a rainforest—from the forest floor, to the canopy, to subterranean cave chambers inspired by Sarawak’s famous Mulu Caves.

The park’s eight zones are connected by a network of intersecting forest trails and wide elevated walkways. They are all suitable for strollers and wheelchairs, allowing visitors to easily move between them, even as the design preserves much of the site’s original flora and topography.

MANDAI WILDLIFE GROUP



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ABOVE LEFT: Rainforest Wild Asia visitors can opt to take a natural pathway made of stones through the wildlife attraction—a decision that allowed developers to maintain much of the site's original flora and fauna.

ABOVE RIGHT: Canopy Jump allows guests to simulate a young bird's first flight from a 13 or 20-meter platform.



“Since we were working to create a rainforest environment, it was crucial for us to retain as many of the mature trees on the original site as we could,” explains Michelle Yik, Mandai Wildlife Group’s lead designer for the park. “That meant adapting our design to fit around the tree clusters, which you’ll see in the winding elevated walkways.”

“The trees not only add authenticity to the experience but also maintain ecological connectivity and provide shade for animals and visitors. We also designed around the existing landscape, rather than altering the natural topography,” adds Yik.

The Business Case: Expanding the Zoo’s Reach

Mandai Wildlife Group expects as many as 900,000 people to visit Rainforest Wild Asia within its first year of operation.

“We want to create a destination that tourists consider a must-visit when coming to Singapore,” says Cheng. “And for locals, it’s a place to proudly share with friends from abroad and a space to engage in meaningful interactions with wildlife.”

The Mandai Wildlife Group, formerly known as Mandai Park Holdings and Wildlife Reserves Singapore, expects the new gated attraction will expand the resort’s appeal to a broader demographic.

“Zoos often cater to families with young children, leaving younger adults and teens under-engaged,” he explains. “With Rainforest Wild Asia, we hope to capture their interest by offering an adventure-based zoo experience that combines excitement with education.”

To this end, the park features a set of high-adrenaline attractions that mimic how animals move through their environments. Canopy Jump simulates a young bird’s first flight, allowing participants to step off a 13 or 20-meter platform into a controlled free fall. The AIA Vitality Bounce, a sprawling netted play area several meters off the ground, lets visitors experience the rainforest canopy as a langur might—bounding and leaping between treetops.

For those seeking something even more extreme, there are three-hour harnessed tours that take participants into otherwise inaccessible areas of the park. In the Wild Apex Adventure, visitors scale 20-meter-high limestone karsts surrounding the habitat of the François’ langur, while spelunkers who sign up for the Wild Cavern Adventure rappel into darkness, squeeze through narrow tunnels, and navigate rocky labyrinths.

These premium activities also create additional revenue streams, from S\$30 for a Canopy Jump to S\$192—more than four times the basic admission price—for an adventure excursion.

Wild by Design

Rainforest Wild Asia is home to 36 species, including the François’ langur and the endangered Philippine spotted deer, both of which are new to Singapore. Three Malayan tigers, including two brothers born at the Night Safari, also reside in the park.

“We live in one of the world’s most biodiverse regions, but many of the region’s species are under threat due to the loss of wild habitats and the negative impact of pollution,” says Mike Barclay, Group CEO of Mandai Wildlife Group. “With the belief that you can’t protect what you don’t

MICHAEL SWITOW



MICHAEL SWITOW





know, we want to raise awareness about the region's incredible wildlife species by shining a spotlight on them in this park."

The park's innovative design presents both opportunities and challenges. Animals enjoy significantly larger habitats to roam and explore compared to traditional zoos, but the expansive spaces and dense foliage can make wildlife viewing less predictable.

"The larger-sized habitats and dense foliage mean animals can sometimes be harder to see, so we had to design the space with strategically placed viewing points while allowing the animals the space they need to thrive," says Michelle Yik, Mandai Wildlife Group's lead designer for the park.

Visitors may hear the distinctive call of the endangered siamang gibbon without spotting it among the trees—something that requires patience and a different mindset from traditional zoo visits. Park officials acknowledge they will need to properly set visitor expectations. The difficulty spotting some animals could be balanced out by spectacular views of others, such as the red-shanked douc langur, a colorful primate that sometimes traverses the elevated walkways.

An Innovative Resort

One of the park's most distinctive features is its 220-meter-long cavern, meticulously modeled after the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Mulu Caves in Sarawak, Malaysia, in collaboration with Kingsmen Creatives.


"It was a huge undertaking, requiring a lot of detail to get the geological and

ecological accuracy just right," Yik says.

"We worked closely with experts and the Sarawak Forestry Corporation, even doing 3D scans of the actual caves. It was a complex task, but the result brings the park to life and adds to the sense of wonder."

The caves are home to luminescent Asian black scorpions, cave racer snakes, and the Cavern Restaurant—what Mandai claims is Singapore's first restaurant in a cave setting. Operated by the Tung Lok Group, this unique dining establishment illuminated by electric candlelight is accessible to the public without requiring park entry.

Mandai Wildlife Reserve also formed a partnership with Banyan Tree on a new 338-room, 4.6-hectare hotel nestled within the reserve, transforming the attraction into a destination resort. The eco-friendly Mandai Rainforest Resort overlooking Singapore's Upper Seletar Reservoir consists of a five-story building with more than 300 rooms and suites, plus 24 treehouses with private patios and a spa with a design inspired by pangolin scales. Hotel guests can enjoy exclusive wildlife experiences, including an early morning visit to Bird Paradise and immersive tours of the zoo for children 6 to 10 years old.

Next up, Mandai Wildlife Reserves plans to expand Rainforest Wild Asia with a new zone, Rainforest Wild Africa, inspired by Madagascar and sub-Saharan Africa, further cementing Singapore's position as a global leader in innovative wildlife experiences. 



Through Mandai Wildlife Reserve's partnership with Banyan Tree, visitors to the Mandai Rainforest Resort enjoy exclusive benefits and wildlife experiences.



Michael Switow is Funworld's Asia-Pacific correspondent. Michael highlights innovation, creativity, and successful business models, along with the people driving the attractions industry. He is also a professional moderator and the co-author of business leadership books. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#):



Destination...

SHANGHAI

World-class attractions
await IAAPA Expo Asia
2025 attendees

by Michael Switow



SHANGHAI'S STATURE AS A GLOBAL ATTRACTIONS HUB continues to rise, making it a fitting host city for IAAPA Expo Asia 2025. Beyond the show floor, the city offers a robust portfolio of parks, resorts, and immersive experiences—many of which demonstrate cutting-edge design, cultural storytelling, and operational excellence.

From the coasters of Shanghai Happy Valley and Shanghai Disney Resort's innovative new Zootopia land, to the high-capacity indoor slopes of L+SNOW and the viral performance spectacles at Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park, the region's attractions reflect the ambitions and capabilities of China's leading operators and global suppliers.

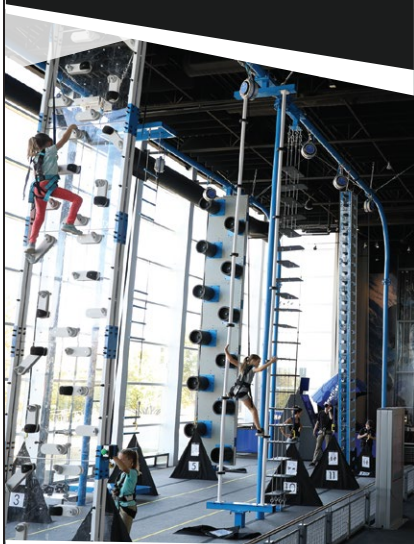
Nearby destinations like Shanghai Maya Beach Water Park, Neobio Children's Science Museum, and Saga City of Light further highlight the diversity and depth of Shanghai's family entertainment landscape.

IAAPA Expo Asia attendees are encouraged to experience these attractions firsthand, as many are located within proximity to the event venue. Whether for benchmarking, inspiration, or leisure, these venues offer valuable insights into China's rapidly evolving attractions offerings.

HAPPY VALLEY SHANGHAI

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HAPPY VALLEY SHANGHAI

Shanghai Happy Valley

OCT Group's Shanghai Happy Valley has welcomed more than 30 million visitors since its launch in 2009. The 65-hectare park is open year-round, has five roller coasters and seven distinct themed areas including Sunshine Port, Happy Times, and Shanghai Bund.

Thrill-seekers flock to the park's international-caliber attractions, including the 60-meter Dive Machine designed by Bolliger & Mabillard and the 1,200-meter wooden Fireball roller coaster created by Great Coasters International. Other standouts include the dual tower Space Shot from S&S Worldwide and the Giant Frisbee from Intamin.

The park also features the Netherlands-manufactured Blue Moon Flyer roller coaster by Vekoma, known for its hybrid

wooden-steel structure and intense curves. In total, Happy Valley boasts more than 40 rides and attractions sourced from countries including the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Switzerland, Canada, and Italy.

A day at Shanghai Happy Valley is capped by the breathtaking Lake of Illusions, designed by France's ECA2. Set against a 32-meter inclined tower, this 18-minute multimedia show blends water, light, sound, and video projections inspired by Chinese mythology to create a sensory journey where Heaven and Earth converge.

Company officials say they continually add new rides and themed events to keep visitors engaged. The park also leverages data analytics to provide visitors with personalized recommendations and services.

sh.happyvalley.cn



HAPPY VALLEY SHANGHAI

Shanghai Maya Beach Water Park

Four years after Shanghai Happy Valley's debut, the OCT Group launched Shanghai Maya Beach Water Park, a 200,000-square-meter park that is one of the most popular in East China. More than 8 million people have visited the seasonal facility since its opening.

Located in the picturesque Sheshan National Tourism Resort and adjacent to Shanghai Happy Valley, the park blends thrilling water attractions with rich Mayan cultural theming, as resident DJs set the beat and offer visitors an immersive escape.

The park's success stems from strategic partnerships with ride manufacturers. WhiteWater provided concept and schematic design, along with a lazy river, FlowRider Double, Fusion Fortress 10, as well as an Abyss, Python, Constrictor, and AquaLoop.

ProSlide complemented this lineup with several attractions, including a TornadoWave 60, BehemothBowl 60, KidX Zone, and eight-lane OctopusRacer.

sh.playamaya.cn



PROSLIDE

L+SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort holds the Guinness World Record for the largest indoor skiing venue. The indoor ski terrain is so big, there is a cable car to transport skiers to the top of the three slopes, which have a 60-meter vertical drop.

The resort also offers a plethora of snow-related activities, including sledding, ice skating, specially designed ice bicycles, a pair of twirling 165-meter-long slides, a 19-meter jump into snow, and an ice cave. A harnessed gravity-powered glider, comparable

Shanghai L+SNOW Indoor Skiing Theme Resort

Spanning nearly 100,000 square meters, the Bank of Communications' Shanghai



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L+ SNOW RESORT

to a zipline but with a spiraling track, offers adventurous visitors aerial views of the winter terrain, while the Snowland Train is ideal for families that prefer to remain on the ground.

Standard tickets, which include ski or snowboard rental plus jacket and ski pants, are priced at CNY 410 and CNY 510 for a half-day and full-day respectively. Gloves are available for purchase in nearby stores.

Beyond cold-weather activities, there are hot springs and a Nordic-themed indoor-outdoor water park designed by WhiteWater with 20 water slides, two AquaPlay structures, 54 AquaSplash toys, and a 13-meter-wide wave pool.

For guests wishing to stay overnight, there are two hotels: an IHG Vignette Collection 17-room lodging that sits between the ski slopes and the nearby Crown Plaza Shanghai Snow World hotel.

The L+ Snow Resort offers a variety of snow-related activities, including sledding, ice skating, ice bicycles, slides, and more.



L+ SNOW RESORT

Neobio Children's Science Museum

The Neobio Children's Science Museum, located in Shanghai's Xuhui West Bund, provides an excellent blend of science and family entertainment. Spanning 6,000 square meters over three floors, Neobio offers hands-on exhibits designed to spark curiosity about the natural world, technology, and space exploration. It is China's first interactive museum dedicated to science and technology.

Designed by Shanghai-based architectural firm X+ Living, the museum blends futuristic aesthetics with immersive learning environments. The attraction is divided into five exhibition areas: energy, biology and aging, art and technology, the cosmos, and a Maker's Hall for creative problem-solving and innovation.

The museum's innovative approach to education comes alive in a room filled with powerful fans, where children don capes and wings to experience the force of lift firsthand—transforming a lesson on wind energy into a Superhero for a Day adventure.

Neobio hosts a variety of science-themed events and family workshops year-round, providing opportunities for children to develop critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills. The museum also employs a smart wristband tracking system, ensuring the safety of young explorers as they roam the exhibits.



NEOBIO CHILDREN'S MUSEUM



The Neobio Children's Science Museum offers a series of family-friendly exhibits dedicated to science and technology.

Saga City of Light

Puy du Fou's Saga City of Light is one of the world's largest immersive theater shows, according to the Guinness World Records. The operation spans more than 12,000 square meters inside Shanghai's Everbright Convention & Exhibition Center.

Set in 1930s Shanghai, visitors explore interconnected sets—including narrow alleys, train compartments and ship cabins—making decisions that determine their unique journey. Guided by a mysterious butler, they meet dozens of characters and explore their stories together in a thrilling life-or-death escape. This \$92 million, 90-minute walkthrough features more than 50 cinematic scenes with divergent and converging narratives. With so many pathways, guests may never experience the entirety of the show in one visit.

The venue features cutting-edge technology, including hundreds of original



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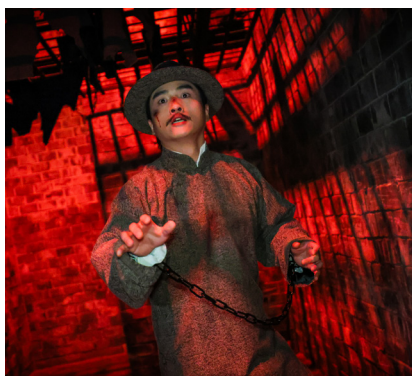


Puy du Fou's Saga City of Light takes visitors on a tour through interconnected sets—traversing narrow alleys, train compartments and ship cabins—all while making decisions that determine how their unique journey will play out.

French audio and lighting systems, alongside meticulously crafted replicas of an 88-meter ship cabin and an 82-meter train carriage, engineered by Canada's Triotech. More than 26,000 vintage props sourced from antique markets enhance the authenticity of this immersive experience.

Complementing the distinctive dining areas, Brasserie Lumière and Shanghai Café and Bar offer exquisite culinary experiences that artfully blend Chinese and French flavors.

sagashanghai.com



Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park

The orcas of Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park's signature show, The Legend of the Orcas, have become a social media sensation, amassing millions of followers. One viral video alone has racked up more than 100 million views, and a recent survey found that 90% of Shanghai visitors consider the show a must-see experience.

The park, which welcomed 4.3 million visitors last year, has themed zones dedicated to Ultraman and the One Piece anime series. Attractions include an Intamin coaster and one of the world's longest rapid river rides, Lava Drifting, a 1-kilometer, 11-minute journey, engineered by Legacy and WhiteWater, with tunnels, multiple drops, and conveyor lifts.

The marine park offers festival-driven content year-round to attract visitors, as well as events like anime dance parties, cosplay gatherings and Guzi stores that sell collectables. Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park Vice General Manager Chole Jiang notes that the park is also planning to "deeply integrate AI technology into every stage of the visitor experience."

haichangoceanpark.com/shanghai

Shanghai Disney Resort

The 963-acre resort's newest addition, the world's first Zootopia-themed land,



SHANGHAI HAICHANG OCEAN PARK

Shanghai Haichang Ocean Park organizes immersive festival offerings that attract the interest of guests.

opened in December 2023 and features a trackless dark ride named Hot Pursuit, character meet-and-greets, and hundreds of innovative themed food and retail offerings. Seasonal celebrations—like the springtime Disney Zootopia Yoga Show, Summer Oasis, Howl-o-ween Festival and Winter Snow-Ball Festival—further immerse guests in the world of Zootopia.

Shanghai Disney Resort President and General Manager Andrew Bolstein tells Funworld that Zootopia “blends Disney magic with the dynamic energy of a modern city like our home of Shanghai, immersing guests of all ages in a vibrant metropolis filled with happiness and discovery.”

The resort also features Tron Lightcycle Power Run, one of the fastest roller coasters at any Disney park worldwide; the Enchanted Storybook Castle—the tallest and largest Disney castle—and Pirates of the Caribbean: Battle for the Sunken Treasure, which is the most advanced iteration of the worldwide franchise, featuring magnetically controlled boats that spin and move in reverse to optimize viewing angles. **FW**

shanghaidisneyresort.com/en



SHANGHAI DISNEY RESORT

ABOVE LEFT: Mickey Mouse keeps the beat as a drummer during a live entertainment performance. LEFT: Mulan rides atop her trusty horse Khan in a parade down Mickey Avenue. ABOVE: Koslov from Zootopia appears larger than life at Shanghai Disneyland.



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Djurs Sommerland employees show off their uniforms, with colors that indicate an individual's role and status.

Dressing for Success

Shaping employee identity and the guest experience with uniforms

by Heather Larson



Heather Larson writes for several trade publications, including Funworld. She resides in the state of Washington, which has very few theme parks, so she lives vicariously through Funworld. Connect with her on [LinkedIn](#):



UNIFORMS AREN'T JUST ABOUT LOOKING NEAT—they're a visual shorthand for roles, responsibilities, and recognition. In the attractions industry, where clarity and consistency are critical to guest satisfaction and operational efficiency, what staff members wear plays an essential part in how teams function.

Whether signaling who can serve alcohol, who's in charge, or who can respond in an emergency, uniforms help guests and employees navigate an attraction's environment with confidence and ease.

Funworld shares how attractions around the world handle uniforms inside and out.

At Silverwood Theme Park in Athol, Idaho, leaders ensure that employees older than age 19 dress in aqua blue to signal that they are authorized to sell alcohol. If a guest needs to flag down a security team member, their garb is gray, notes Michele Sheets, human resources director.

At Djurs Sommerland in Denmark, team leaders in the sales areas wear black polos so they stand out from everyone else, says Natasja Jarshøj, human resources & sales coordinator. The black clothing also gives the employee more authority if a guest asks to speak to a manager.

The Benefits of Uniforms

Ed Taylor, managing director of Taylor Made Designs, a uniform supplier in Christchurch, Dorset, United Kingdom, details four key merits of dressing in uniforms for Funworld:

- Guests can easily spot staff, which improves their park experience.
- Employees present a professional image, which reflects the attraction's standards.
- Uniforms promote brand identity and create a cohesive look.
- Certain workers wear high-visibility clothing to stay safe.

At Ocean Park Hong Kong, Events and Entertainment Director Eva Au Yeung says wearing standardized attire instills a sense of belonging and pride for the individual and to the park.

Melissa Chung, director of waterpark, spa, and leisure operations at Studio City Macau resort, agrees. The uniform gives staff a more polished and professional look, which makes them more approachable and authoritative.

Take Time to Deliberate

Comfort should be a priority. Staff should feel comfortable in their uniforms whether they are walking up and down coaster platforms, running while performing lifeguard duties, or standing for extended periods behind a prize redemption counter, says Taylor. Since frontline employees are more mobile, the fabric must be durable. Sustainable fabrics, where possible, is another plus.

"In the last few years, we have had a focus on sustainability, and therefore we have chosen to buy polos and sweatshirts that are made out of recycled plastic bottles," says Jarshøj of Djurs Sommerland.

Choosing colors can play a huge part in a client's decision, says Taylor. Of course,

matching the attraction's brand and story remains crucial, but operators also must take into consideration other factors. For example, in zoo settings, bright colors might alarm the animals or attract insects.

Slide operators at Studio City Macau wear lime green for its high visibility, while lifeguard garb is light brown and features an easily identifiable, red "Lifeguard" label on the shirt. Chung says they also add reflective strips and red patches to enhance visibility.

Cost must also be considered—not only for the initial order of uniforms, but also for future smaller orders. Some attractions require staff to buy their own uniforms, while others supply them.

The working environment and climate is another vital consideration. Taylor says some attractions have teams standing in parking lots for hours, sometimes in adverse weather conditions. Whether the workers' days are filled with sun or rain, layering up or down provides a good, comfortable solution.

Shoes complete the look, but at many attractions, staff are permitted to wear what they already have—with some caveats. At Sommerland, team members wear closed-toe and neutral-colored shoes. This footwear needs to have good shock absorption that enables the team member to stand or walk around for a full shift, says Jarshøj.

Studio City Macau employees wear Crocs or another form of foam shoes—perfect for the park's wet environment. Chung says Crocs were chosen because they are lightweight, easy to clean, offer traction, and provide comfort for all-day wear.

If a team member spends most of the day at a water park or an aquarium, Taylor suggests water-resistant shoes.

There are other helpful miscellaneous items that can be added to the repertoire. Depending on the worker's role, they may need reflective vests, safety helmets, sunblock sleeves, gloves, or down-filled jackets for cold weather operation, like Christmas events held during the shoulder season. Belts, water bottle bags, waist bags, name badges, and sunglasses all need a safe place—like pockets—to reside on a uniform. Accessories like radios and tools might also be necessary.

That's why Ocean Park provides jumpsuits for their animal and maintenance teams.

"The jumpsuit design helps reduce loose items which may impact animal enclosures or plant machinery," says Au Yeung.

She says management reviews their uniforms at Ocean Park periodically and obtains staff feedback to see if adjustments are needed.


When deciding on uniforms, employees should have a say because it increases morale and helps ensure the uniforms meet the practical needs of the staff member, says Taylor.

"Feedback should be collected through surveys or focus groups, where employees can express preferences for fabric, style, comfort, and whatever else they need," he says. "My big advice is that not all suggestions can be implemented."

Finding a uniform company that offers "wearer trials" in the early phase of a new uniform process is another way operators can garner staff input, before a large investment is made into new apparel.

Tackling Attire Challenges

When the uniform doesn't fit well, that affects the employee's comfort which can lead to dissatisfaction or reduced performance. Because these uniforms are worn often and laundered frequently, their life cycles are short, says Taylor.

"When I see tired-looking or sun-bleached attire, I replace the uniforms for free," says Sheets. "We want our staff looking nice and well-groomed." 

Funworld Takeaways

Ed Taylor, managing director of Taylor Made Designs, a uniform supplier in the United Kingdom, shares quick insight that decision makers need to keep in mind when evolving uniforms.

- ✓ Employee uniforms are a crucial part of the attraction's branding and guest experience.
- ✓ Uniforms should be designed with employee comfort and functionality in mind.
- ✓ Garment choices should enforce brand consistency.
- ✓ Uniforms need to adapt to different climate conditions or change with the season (warm summer season vs. chilly holiday events).
- ✓ Flexibility and practicality can foster a positive work environment.

OCEAN PARK



Ocean Park's maintenance crew wears jumpsuits designed to reduce losing items that may impact animal habitats or plant machinery.

DREAMFUNS



Clawing for Attention

How skill games drive revenue and repeat play

by **Michael Switow**

WALK INTO A COW PLAY COW MOO OR FUN CLAW ARCADE in Singapore and you will find endless rows of crane games. The claw crane craze is alive and well in Taiwan as well, where there are hundreds of mega claw arcades, each with a footprint of more than 3,500 square feet. Players compete to see who can be the first to catch a toy inside the translucent prize-filled box, as well as in interactive video games displayed on overhead screens.

Once a solitary game, where the thrill of grabbing a prize was matched only by the agony of a near miss, modern claw games are becoming more socially-oriented and competitive.

“Old-school crane machines were simply ‘grab and win.’ Players only felt joy when they won,” explains Cybele Chiu, the overseas manager of Guangzhou DreamFuns Amusement Technology. “We’ve reimagined the experience, adding free mini games to attract people and timed competitions to create even more excitement.”

PRO TIP



Although some machines can operate for more than 20 years, regularly refreshing or replacing outdated offerings encourages repeat visitation by guests.

Since launching in 2012, DreamFuns has designed and manufactured more than 25 types of prize machines. Its games can be found in more than 750 locations across China, the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Southeast Asia.

“Skill games are some of the highest earners on the game floor,” adds John Kolliniatis, the chief executive of Player One

Amusement Group. “Ensuring a broad mix of skill games helps attract a broad customer base with younger players and families attending during the day, and university and adult players visiting in the evenings.”

“Competition, head-to-head or group, is what drives revenue and repeat play,” notes Elaut Group USA Executive Vice President of Sales Anthony Maniscalco. “Repetitious play drives revenue and is necessary to acquire the skill techniques to win on a consistent basis.”

The Belgian-headquartered Elaut, which manufactures crane machines and coin-pusher games, introduced an early closed loop system that recycles coins inside a machine, while separating ticket cards and plastic tokens to be vended to the player.

Choosing the Right Prize

Whether it is a crane game or more traditional midway game of skill, such as shooting basketball free throws or tossing a ring over a bottle, an attraction’s choice of prizes plays a crucial role in determining a game’s success.

Operators must weigh the drawing power of recognizable characters against their impact on profit margins. Maniscalco suggests focusing on enduring licensed properties when making premium prize choices.

“A licensed plush toy of a famous cartoon character is more desirable than a generic pink bunny. However, the cost differential between licensed and generic plush toy can be significant,” Maniscalco explains.

“When Elaut selects an IP [intellectual property] for our coin-pushers, we look for licenses that are evergreen and span a number of generations. The Wizard of Oz, Willy Wonka, and Superman, for example, have instant, global brand name recognition that make for exciting gameplay.”

Kolliniatis at Player One Amusement Group recognizes plush will “always be one of the top prizes,” but he recommends facility operators also widen their prize portfolio. “Small electronics and other prizes for the parents should also be included in the mix,” Kolliniatis says.

Prize rotation strategies also impact revenue sustainability. Kolliniatis advises operators to monitor which items generate the most player interest and adjust inventory accordingly.

PRO TIP



While varying by region, attraction type, and target demographics, a general guideline is that arcades should have 50% redemption games, 25% video games, and 25% instant prizes. Games of skill span all three categories.

“Some prizes will always be popular, but it is a good idea to rotate prizes and introduce new ones regularly. If a prize took longer to be selected, replace it with something new and fun, but always stock the prizes that people choose regularly,” he says.

Using Data Analytics

Modern payment and information systems have eliminated the need for cash and enable remote monitoring, providing arcade operators with powerful insights and real-time analytics into customer behavior and game performance.

“Data will show you which games have the most play and allow you to position them on the game floor so they are spread out, which in turn encourages customers to walk the whole floor to find them,” advises Kolliniatis. “Put a high performing game in between two games that are lower performers, so that while players wait to play the popular game, they will play the games nearby, thus increasing profits for all machines.”

PRO TIP



Ensuring ROI is crucial. A well-selected game should pay for itself within one year.

When the numbers indicate that a game is underperforming, there are several possible explanations. The game may no longer be popular, it could need maintenance, or it may be priced too high.

“Card management systems offer real-time data and allow the operator to make changes to games from any computer or cellular device,” says Maniscalco. “The game management and data capabilities are amazing.”

Staffing Tips

Rising labor costs and the challenge of hiring sufficient peak-season workers have led some facilities to gravitate toward tap-to-play games that do not require an operator. While this may appear cost-effective, Shaun Corrigan, a Dubai-based consultant who specializes in midway games, has a bias toward old-school operations.

“There’s nothing quite like the interaction and the feeling of real midway games, where you’ve got barkers calling out to passersby, encouraging guests to try again and handing out the big prizes when there’s a winner. You can’t recreate this buzz and instant gratification with coin-operated games,” Corrigan says. “It’s the theater and handing out of prizes that creates its own atmosphere.”

Even DreamFuns’ claw games provide an option for emcees to drum up competition and create a lively atmosphere.

Whether in a family entertainment center or amusement park, emcees and game operators must be properly trained and should enjoy the performance aspect of their role.

“You can’t put anybody on a game and expect them to perform,” Corrigan notes, adding that some operators fail to provide adequate staffing, then blame the games for non-performance.

“Don’t put games of skill in the back,” he adds. “They need to be in places with high footfall—like near food courts—so that people see the prizes and have the impulse to play.”

Using Space to Maximize Revenue

What’s the best way an attraction can use its floor space to drive a return on investment? Kolliniatis has some ideas.


“The number of games to put on a game floor is directly related to the square footage and the goals of the business,” advises Kolliniatis. “If the space is smaller, use smaller footprint games to get the maximum number and variety into the space. For a larger game floor, operators can use larger footprint games as centerpiece attractions and offer wider variety.”

PRO TIP



To maximize visitor fun and attraction revenue, consider offering one game for every 75 square feet of space, including the prize redemption counters. By this logic, a 3,000-square-foot entertainment center should have 40 games.

Kolliniatis also believes the aesthetic and energy of the game play environment can directly lead to greater success.

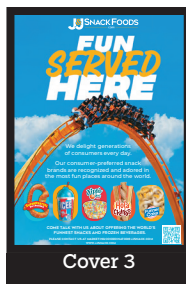
“Traditional attractions can learn several lessons from skill-based games,” he adds. “One, have an interactive experience that makes people want to play again and again. Two, have an experience where people feel they have a chance of winning and that is not random. Three, have experiences that people can play with their loved ones that provides a fun competitive element. Everyone wants the bragging rights of getting the highest score or winning the biggest prize,” Kolliniatis concludes. 



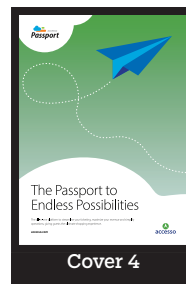
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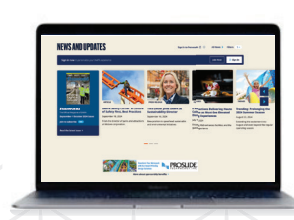
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“Finding Possible” in Asia This Year



JACK CHAN

SUSTAINABILITY IS A KEY STRATEGIC PRIORITY FOR IAAPA, and the APAC team proudly contributed to this important cause by hosting the inaugural IAAPA APAC Sustainability Summit in Singapore this March.

The event brought together more than 90 participants from across the globe, all eager to deepen their understanding of sustainability within the attractions industry. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with many stating that the insights shared by the speakers were directly relevant to their operations. Many also expressed their appreciation to IAAPA for leading the way in advancing sustainable practices.

A key takeaway from the summit was the shared understanding that sustainability is a long-term journey—one that begins with small, intentional steps.

A heartfelt thank you to all our speakers, partner sponsors, attendees, and the APAC team for making the summit a tremendous success.


As we welcome the spring season in Asia, the APAC team is in full swing preparing for IAAPA Expo Asia 2025, taking place in Shanghai from June 30 to July 3.

This year's expo marks a significant milestone—our return to mainland China after a six-year hiatus.

This year's expo marks a significant milestone—our return to mainland China after a six-year hiatus. As we know, the attractions landscape across the Asia-Pacific region has evolved dramatically, making this edition of IAAPA Expo Asia an event not to miss.

With the theme “Finding Possible,” the expo will serve as a dynamic platform for industry professionals to discover innovative solutions, enhance their operations, and adapt to today's ever-changing business environment. IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 will feature two EDUTours, and nearly 20 educational sessions presented by an inspiring lineup of speakers. We are honored to welcome Jill Estorino, president and managing director of Disney Parks International, as the keynote speaker for our Leadership Breakfast. Additionally, our opening night reception will be held at Shanghai Disney Resort.

These exciting events, along with unparalleled networking and learning opportunities, make this year's expo the must-attend event for anyone in the Asia-Pacific attractions industry.

IAAPA Asia Pacific continues to grow and innovate, always seeking new ways to deliver value to our members. We sincerely thank those who have volunteered their time and expertise on various committees. Your continued support is invaluable. If you're interested in getting involved or exploring volunteer opportunities, we encourage you to reach out to our team—we'd love to hear from you. 

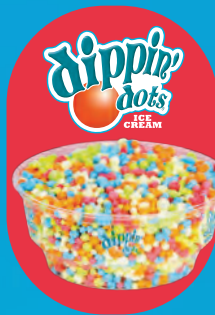
IAAPA Expo Asia 2024 was Jack Chan's first IAAPA Expo as the vice president and executive director of IAAPA Asia-Pacific. Based in Hong Kong SAR, he previously held roles with industry technology companies and the healthcare sector in Shanghai, New York, and Iowa. Jack looks forward to welcoming all to the festivities awaiting attendees in Shanghai at IAAPA Expo Asia 2025 in June. Connect with him on [LinkedIn](#):



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